1. Workshop organization

Organized under the auspices of the International Language Testing Association (ILTA), the Workshop entitled *Promoting European Assessment Standards in Romania* aimed to fill in the gap between intended official policies, actual policies and current practices (policy in use) in the field of foreign languages, by assisting teachers with understanding and applying relevant descriptors from the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in order to enhance the quality of test development and examination procedures. The 3,000 US dollar grant generously awarded by the International Language Testing Association (ILTA) contributed to ensuring the good organization of the two-day workshop for a group of 33 participants coming from 4 different Romanian counties (Prahova, Dambovita, Buzau, Brasov), as well as the travel costs, accommodation, and honorarium of the invited keynote speaker and Workshop leader, dr. Jana Bérešová, Head of the English Language and Literature Department, Trnava University, Slovakia.

The Workshop homepage [http://iltaworkshopro2013.wordpress.com/](http://iltaworkshopro2013.wordpress.com/) provides information with regard to the Workshop program, facilitators and participants, ILTA Workshop Ro Gmail community, useful resources, follow-up events, and a few photos to remind us of the two wonderful and fruitful days that we spent learning from one another.

The language of the Workshop was English, but among the participants there were also a few academics interested in using European descriptors of performance when assessing students’ competences in French, German, and Romanian as a foreign language.
2. Participants

The organization of an ILTA Workshop provided the official setting that we needed in order to start an educational reform in the 4 counties (Prahova, Dambovita, Buzau, and Brasov) that depend on the teacher training services provided by the Philology Department of Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti. Academics, teacher trainers, inspectors, and teachers of English from lower and upper secondary institutions in the four above-mentioned counties benefited from this event by learning how to develop, relate and validate a test, and how to teach and explain the use of the CEFR and the Manual to current and future teachers of languages. A Gmail community was created for the current and future participants that would like to be actively involved in similar events

https://plus.google.com/u/0/communities/100551093065682263632
## Organizer and keynote speaker

Assoc. prof. dr. Maria-Ionela Neagu  
Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești

## Invited keynote speaker

Assoc. prof. dr. Jana Bérešová  
Trnava University, Slovakia

### Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IRINA TOMA</td>
<td>Head of Department, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associate professor – English Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANCA MIHAELA DOBRINESCU</td>
<td>Dean of the Letters and Sciences Faculty, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Associate professor – English Culture and Civilization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADRIANA ARCOSI</td>
<td>Inspector, Prahova Inspectorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English teacher, ‘I.L.Caragiale’ National College, Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANA-MARIA VLADAU</td>
<td>Inspector, Brasov Inspectorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English teacher, ‘Tudor Ciortea’ Highschool of Music, Brasov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARIA MIRICA</td>
<td>Inspector, Dambovita Inspectorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>English teacher, ‘Constantin Brancoveanu’ Technological Highschool, Targoviste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADINA CALIN</td>
<td>English Teacher, ‘Toma N. Socolescu’ Technical College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADINA NICOLAE</td>
<td>Lecturer - English Linguistics, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRISTINA CIRNECI</td>
<td>English Teacher, ‘Constantin Brancoveanu’ Secondary School, Breaza, Prahova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRISTINA GAFU</td>
<td>Associate professor – Romanian as a foreign language, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRISTINA IRIDON</td>
<td>Lecturer – Romanian as a foreign language, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRISTINA PREDA</td>
<td>English Teacher, Bertea Primary and Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANIELA BALALIA</td>
<td>English teacher, Spiru Haret Highschool, Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANIELA DAVID</td>
<td>English teacher, ‘Alexandru Marghiloman’ Theoretical Highschool, Buzau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIANA PARASCHIV</td>
<td>Assistant Lecturer - English Linguistics, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELENA DUMITRU</td>
<td>Lecturer in French Linguistics, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLORENTINA MARGARIT</td>
<td>English Teacher, Darmanesti Secondary School, Dambovita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GABRIELA VLAD</td>
<td>English Teacher, Magurele Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGIANA STANEMIR</td>
<td>English Teacher, ‘I.L.Caragiale’ National College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOANA EPARU</td>
<td>Lecturer in English Culture and Civilization, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRENA OLTEANU</td>
<td>English Teacher, Technical College of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRINA MIHAILA</td>
<td>English Teacher, ‘Dora Dalles’ Primary and Secondary School, Bucsani, Dambovita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAURA STOICESCU</td>
<td>English Teacher, ‘Andrei Nicolescu-Pacureti’ Secondary School, Pacureti, Prahova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIVIU OLTEANU</td>
<td>English Teacher, ‘Nicolae Rucareanu’ Silviculture Highschool, Brasov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOREDA NAȚEDU</td>
<td>Lecturer - Romanian as a foreign language, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARIA PARASCHIV</td>
<td>Assistant Lecturer - English and French Linguistics, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARIUS NICA</td>
<td>Lecturer – Romanian as a foreign language, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIHAELA BADEA</td>
<td>Lecturer in English Teaching Methodology, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIHAELA DUMĂ</td>
<td>Assistant Lecturer - German as a foreign language, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RALUCA CURSARU</td>
<td>English Teacher, ‘Gheorghe Costescu’ Primary and Secondary School, Alunis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROXANA ZINCA</td>
<td>English Teacher, Gura Vîitoarei Primary and Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMONA BOERU</td>
<td>English Teacher, ‘Constantin Istrati’ Technical College, Campina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMONA ERHAN</td>
<td>English Teacher, ‘Constantin Carabella’ National College, Târgoviște, Dambovita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERONICA MANESCU</td>
<td>English Teacher, I.A. Bassarabescu Secondary School, Ploiești</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One inspector already filled out her application form to join ILTA and a few other participants expressed their wish to become ILTA members in order to update their knowledge and competences more frequently than before.

### 3. Workshop leaders

Dr. Jana Bérešová, head of the English Language and Literature Department at Trnava University (Slovak Republic) kindly agreed to lead the workshop. She has great experience in item writing and in relating Matura language examinations to the CEFR. She was involved as an active member of the RelEx team, a project of the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) entitled “Training in relating examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages” (RelEx, 2010-2011).


Dr. Maria-Ionela Neagu, associate professor at the Philology Department, Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti, took part in the pilot stage (2006-2008) of the Council of Europe’s *Manual for Relating*
Language Examinations to CEFR. The research involved relating tests to the CEFR focusing on different competences, following the Manual’s procedures and validating them on a group of 1801 secondary students in Prahova county, relating objectives and competences in the English curriculum for lower and upper secondary education (in particular the 8th and the 12th grades) to CEFR descriptors to identify the gaps between the level of performance targeted by the objectives and the target level stipulated by the curriculum, and relating texts and tasks from English textbooks to the CEFR in order to identify the gap between the level targeted by the textbooks and the level stipulated by the curriculum.

4. Workshop program

The ILTWorkshopRo2013 event lasted for 2 days and it was held in one of the rooms of the Philology Department, at Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti. Accommodation was offered upon request.

**WORKSHOP PROGRAM**

**Friday, October 18, 2013 (Room JII11)**

08:30 Opening and introduction to the workshop (Ionela Neagu and Jana Bérešová)
- Aims of the Workshop
- Introduction participants
09:00 Presentation: Fundamental Considerations - Validity (Jana Bérešová)
Group work on validity issues (Jana Bérešová and Ionela Neagu)
- The CEFR and the tests
- Tests content and constructs
10:15 Coffee Break
10:30 Familiarisation with CEFR levels (Jana Bérešová and Ionela Neagu)
Discussion on the levels in relation with the Romanian tests
11:30 Presentation on Item Construction (general principles) (Jana Bérešová)
Discussion on various tasks taken from coursebooks and relating them to the CEFR (Ionela Neagu)
12:30 Lunch Break
13:30 Testing receptive and productive skills (Jana Bérešová)
Discussion
14:30 Task construction by the participants
15:30 Coffee Break
15:45 Presentation of the tasks and discussion
17:30 Planning day 2
5. An action approach

From the beginning, the participants benefited from adequate familiarization with the CEFR levels and descriptors of performance. Dr Jana Bérešová explained how validity is embedded in all the stages of test development and how reliability is closely related to it. While Day 1 started with an overview of general principles, step-by-step with each session, the activities were adjusted to meet the participants’ needs. They learned to distinguish between items devised for practice during classwork and items devised for inclusion in achievement tests when developing and assessing receptive competences. They were also involved in relating various tasks to CEFR scales of descriptors in order to establish the adequate level of performance targeted by each task. Quality criteria in item construction and ethical concerns in test development were also highlighted.

On the second day of the Workshop, the training proceeded from the open and vivid discussion of a sample paper towards independent rating of several performance samples. Dr Ionela Neagu conducted a session in which the participants rated some students’ written productive skills as evinced by several sample papers using CEFR scales for Overall written production, Coherence, Accuracy, Range of vocabulary, and Argumentative writing. The activity emphasized the importance of task formulation and features of the expected written product.

On a different session, the participants were asked to work in groups in order to devise properly detailed marking criteria in the case of written production tasks according to the analytical scales used in the Romanian Baccalaureate examinations.

The Workshop ended with Jana Bérešová’s presentation of the procedures for relating examinations to the CEFR according to the Council of Europe’s Manual and issues concerning the training of panel experts, setting the cut-off scores, standard setting, the role of the external advisor, the use of statistical data to confirm the claims. Thus, the participants understood that each training session organized during the Workshop represented an important stage of the whole procedure that must be followed once the official calibration process begins.
6. Feedback

All participants were invited to take a short survey [http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q8MTC7J](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Q8MTC7J) with a view to assessing their satisfaction regarding the training activities and resources, as well as the suitability and efficiency of the Workshop.

However, even before taking the survey, some of the participants expressed their opinions on the site of the Gmail community. Here are some of them:
27 feedback forms were returned and the results showed the participants’ satisfaction with the Workshop both in terms of organizational issues, and with regard to training content and procedures.

- **Organization**: 21 participants considered the event *extremely organized*, while 6 appreciated it as *very organized*.
- **Information clarity**: 24 participants deemed the information *extremely clear*, 2 *quite clear*, and 1 *slightly clear*.
- **Materials suitability**: 26 participants agreed that the materials presented by the workshop facilitators were *highly suitable*, while 1 appreciated them as *moderately suitable*.
- **Degree of interaction**: 17 participants considered that they interacted with the two trainers *extremely often*, while 10 appreciated that they interacted *quite often*.
- **Usefulness of activities for future teaching career development**: 15 participants appreciated the activities as *extremely useful*, 11 as *very useful*, and 1 as *moderately useful*.

- **Strengths**:

- The opportunity we had as teachers to meet experienced professionals and researchers in the field of language testing and CEFR. Also, another important gain was that we were given an even clearer picture of what relating language tests to CEFR means through the practical activities within the workshop. Lastly, the inter-cultural aspect of the workshop was extremely useful.

- The information presented was based on facts.

- Efficient trainers, important information presented in a clear manner, relevant issues brought under discussion, practical solutions provided for the current problems in testing in our country.

- Sharing information, a professional point of view on testing items.

- We were presented a very interesting approach on testing and exams correlation to CEFR which made me reconsider the way I create and correct my tests. We could effectively create marking schemes and we shared ideas about evaluating the level of our textbooks, which was very useful.

- **Weaknesses**:

- The workshop in itself did not have any weak points. It was rather the fact that linking language tests to the CEFR cannot be applicable nationally in Romania yet. But I’m sure in due time this will be done and that is why there is great need of many more workshops of this nature.

- The theory should have been sustained by more real life examples taken from various levels.

- Lack of time: Creating marking criteria and relating the tests to the CEFR can be difficult.

- Absence of some participants from the Romanian Ministry of Education.

- There were none, just the big regret that things do not happen in the same way in our country.

- There were not weaknesses of this Workshop.
Opportunities envisaged as a result of ILTA Workshop:

- Suggestions regarding follow-up events and activities:
  - to organize similar workshops in the other Romanian counties;
  - to design items for class test papers;
  - to involve both students and teachers in similar training sessions;
  - to enlarge upon the CEFR descriptors in relation to the National Curriculum and FL textbooks;
  - to initiate regular school-based and/or region-based meetings on item construction and marking criteria;
  - to extend and then, publish the research in order to have greater impact;
  - to organize a national workshop or initiate meetings with representatives from the Ministry of Education.

A Research and Testing Center is going to be set up in order to enhance cooperation with School Inspectorates and meet the needs of foreign language teachers.

7. Follow-up events

The first follow-up event was organized at Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti, on December 16, 2013. The research seminar focused on two main topics: 1. Relating curricular prescriptions for English Major and ESP to the CEFR; 2. Formulating the language policy of the University. The participants understood the need for setting clear standards of performance for our students and the way in which the European descriptors can make a difference when trying to project the progress path from B2 (level stipulated by the curriculum for upper-secondary education) to C1 or even C2 (levels stipulated by the National Register of Qualifications). Members of the Philology Department are going to work in teams to revise the current curriculum, in terms of competence development, standard setting, assessment and marking.
criteria, and student awareness. Proficiency standards will be clearly stated in a coherent language policy of the University.

The second follow-up event is to be held in Brasov, in February 2014. The target audience comprises teachers of English from different lower and upper secondary education institutions. The main topics of discussion will be: 1. The socio-cognitive framework to testing writing and speaking; 2. The intercultural dimension in language teaching.
Other follow-up events are going to be planned and organized in Dambovita and Buzau, the other two Romanian counties that sent their representatives (inspectors and teachers) to the ILTA Workshop in Ploiesti. The participant inspectors and teachers are willing to disseminate the information and to explain to their colleagues what they learnt during the Workshop.

Furthermore, the Philology Department will undertake the responsibility of organizing annual research seminars, as a promoter of high standards of professionalism in language testing and assessment practices. Teachers of foreign languages that come to our University for annual in-service training will be actively involved from now on. The Gmail community and the Workshop homepage we created will facilitate easier and faster communication among current and future participants.

8. Summary
Assoc. prof. dr. Maria-Ionela Neagu
Ploiesti, December 19, 2013

Contact

Assoc. prof. dr. Maria-Ionela Neagu

Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti
Philology Department
39, Bucharest Avenue
100680
Ploiesti, Prahova
Romania
http://www.upg-ploiesti.ro/index.html

T: +40 244 573 171; X: 293
T: +40723176749
E: ionela.neagu06@yahoo.com; ionela.neagu06@gmail.com