

M.A. FOURTH LEVEL EXAMINATION

IT4004: COMMUNICATION SKILLS II

May 2005 - Time allowed: 2 hours and 30 minutes

Candidates should answer ALL questions in Section A and ONE question in Section B. All questions MUST be written in the booklet.

SECTION A

1. **Leggi il seguente articolo.**

An Italian lesson for Europe

The declining birth rate in Italy offers a harsh warning to economies which fail to cater for the needs of families

Will Hutton

Sunday September 26, 2004

[The Observer](#)

(1) For/

(1) For the past few days, Italy has been bewitched by 79-year-old Giorgio Angelozzi's quest for a family. The former Latin teacher had placed an advert in the *Corriere della Sera*, mourning his loneliness as he became increasingly infirm and asked to be adopted as a grandfather. On Friday, besieged by offers, he had found his family.

(2) The story had such a resonance not only for its charm and pathos, but because it spoke to one of the disturbing but increasingly dominant themes in Italian life and which was the organising topic at last week's annual Anglo-Italian conference at the former monastery in Siena's outlying village of Pontignano. Italy is dying - and Mr Angelozzi is a forerunner of what is to come.

(3) For Italy is suffering a baby bust; in 2004, its population is starting to decline. Even if Italian men and women start to form more families earlier and have more babies in the immediate future, Italy's population is set to drop from today's 58 million to some 44 million by 2050. If there is no recovery in the birth rate, its population will fall even further.

(4) ... The consequence of a population falling by these numbers infects every pore of a civilisation. The rate of economic growth falls before, ultimately, it contracts. Schools and companies alike face stagnation and decline; what grows is every aspect of care for the elderly. Pensions become unaffordable. Music, film, literature, art and theatre all start to wilt before the same ageing and decline contagion. The wellsprings of creativity - optimism, hope for a better tomorrow and the need to explore the human condition - run dry. The defining feelings are of loneliness and defeat.

(5) In Italy, there is an urgent debate about why the birth rate is so low. The Vatican's grip on the country's culture and mores remains fierce, even if attendance at church is in headlong decline; guilt-ridden Italians have children only when they marry. Just 10 per cent of births are outside marriage; in Britain, it is 41 per cent. Moreover, the average 30-year-old Italian man is still living at home, while the average age that an Italian woman has her first child is over 30, compared to under 27 in Britain. Marrying late, Italians necessarily have fewer children.

(6) The most cited reason is housing. Rented accommodation is over-regulated, and buying a house or flat is made impossibly difficult. Regulated Italian banks, protected/

protected from takeover by Italy's complex system of family cross-shareholding in Europe's least competitive financial system, are famously hopeless at mortgage lending. While first-time buyers in Britain can expect to borrow as much 100 per cent of the price of their first house or flat, and pay less than 2 per cent in fees and tax, Italian first-time buyers are lucky if they can borrow two-thirds of the value of their first house - and pay an extraordinary 10 per cent in fees and tax. Young Italians have to live at home and save, because their banking system won't take risks.

(7) ... The decision to have a child is not just about having your own roof over your head; it is about whether the wider economic, social and cultural structures support women's need both to combine independence and the rewards from working with all the demands that fall to them in child-rearing. There is much less part-time work in Italy than in Britain; childcare structures are even more primitive; working patterns are habitually family unfriendly; and Italian 'new' men, ready to take a half-share in the duties of parenting, are scarcer in Italy than they are in Britain. The vortex of gender relationships, morality, traditional expectations of women and women's changing expectations of themselves, inflexible work patterns and expensive housing that contribute to the falling birth rate are all more acute, but their irresolution is confronting Italy with a crisis that menaces its very being as a national community and continuing civilisation.

(8) But we in Britain cannot be smug. We share the same problems. Part of the explanation for our slightly higher birth rate is that we have twice as many immigrants as Italy and their birth rate is much higher, but the birth rate of second- and third-generation British immigrant women soon falls to the levels of the population that has been here for longer, only just above the Italian.

(9) The key to the projections that Britain's population will rise is the expectation that we will continue to benefit from more immigration, but if the numbers dry up or the right-wing populist press, UKIP and Migration Watch get their way, Britain would be facing, if not the same collapse in population as Italy, a gentle decline. Even as it is, our average age is set to climb.

(10) In this debate, business cannot escape either the consequences or playing its part in finding a solution, something that is increasingly understood in Italy, however reluctantly./

reluctantly. When your very civilisation is under threat, small firms complaining about the cost of maternity and paternity leave so their staff can have children are given short shrift. It is blatantly obvious that business is part of the national community and has to contribute to the common good or else it goes down the pan with the rest of society.

(11) ... businesses have to operate in a society which is coming to terms with the fact that men and women alike now hold new attitudes and behave in different ways to the ways they behaved in past decades. Their needs have to be accommodated and supported, not just as a matter of principle but in our collective self-interest. Business must share the burden of these changes or confront trading in an economy and civilisation that shrivels on the vine.

Italy, and Signor Angelozzi, offer warnings we must heed.

2. Rispondi alle seguenti domande.

- (a) Spiega qual è il caso del Sig. Giorgio Angelozzi e perché è emblematico di una situazione sociale.
- (b) Quali potrebbero essere, secondo l'autore dell'articolo gli effetti del calo delle nascite?
- (c) Riassumi i paragrafi 6 e 7.
- (d) Qual è la situazione del tasso delle nascite in Gran Bretagna in questo momento?
- (e) Riassumi i paragrafi 10 e 11.

SECTION B/

SECTION B

Scrivi una composizione di circa 400 parole su uno dei seguenti argomenti.

- 1) Può esistere l'oggettività di storia e attualità? Facendo riferimento al contesto italiano, discuti come la conoscenza di fatti storici e anche dell'attualità sia diversamente interpretata a seconda dei momenti storici e delle influenze politiche.
 - 2) Italia paese di bellezze artistiche e naturali ma anche di antichi problemi come la mafia e di disfunzioni e difficoltà quotidiane. Qual è l'immagine complessiva dell'Italia che tu hai maturato alla fine del tuo percorso di studi? Discuti facendo riferimento anche a temi toccati in classe durante il tuo corso.
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