Filter bubbles

SPEAKING

LEVEL	NUMBER	LANGUAGE
Advanced	C1_4068S_EN	English

Goals

- Can read, listen to and understand a more detailed text on personalised algorithms.
- Can give an extended opinion as to whether the personalisation of search engine results is a good or a bad thing.

It has been said that no man is an island, but at the same time we seem to be increasingly **isolating** ourselves from anyone who disagrees with us.

Social media and the news

How much of your news comes from **social media**?

What other sites do you use to get your **news**?

Search engines

Which search engine do you use on the internet?
Do you only access one?

A polarised society

Answer these questions.

1. Many people say we live in a polarised society. Do you think this is true in your country?
2. How often do you meet people with opposing views to you?
3. Do you think TV news channels in your country are biased?

Filter bubbles

The phrase **filter bubble** was **coined** in 2010. Over the past year it has been almost impossible to escape the concept. So what is it exactly?

As we increasingly consume news via social media, we are **falling prey** to the filter bubble. **Algorithms** on social media platforms automatically feed us news which **aligns** with our preferences. The platforms not only know our preferences from what we write about ourselves, but also from our whole internet history: everything we read and comment on directs what we will be shown next. The result is that certain views are filtered out of our news feed, and the news we get is increasingly **one-sided**. The user has significantly less contact with opposing viewpoints, the consequence of which is **intellectual isolation**.

Filter bubbles

Searches for, and awareness of, the term **filter bubble** escalated in 2016. This coincided with a greater awareness of fake news.

Consumers are becoming **progressively** more aware of the fact that we are being fed news rather than searching for it ourselves. Are they using this to their advantage?

Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps with words from the text.

coining	aligned	fall prey	algorithms

1. Elderly people are apt to _____ to thieves.
2. Alan Freed is credited with _____ the term rock and roll.
3. Social networks use _____ to predict if fans of one site will like a similar one.
4. John _____ himself with his friends against a common enemy.

Filter bubbles

Were you aware of the term **filter bubble** before reading this text?

Why do you think it came to prominence when it did?

Algorithms

Have you noticed that when you go on a search engine or on social media, you are mainly shown things that you agree with?

Does this bother you?

Intellectual isolation

Discuss some of the consequences of intellectual isolation.

misunderstandings

polarisation

Your preferences

In what ways might it be useful when internet search results are aligned with your preferences?

shopping

music

films

games

Get ready to listen

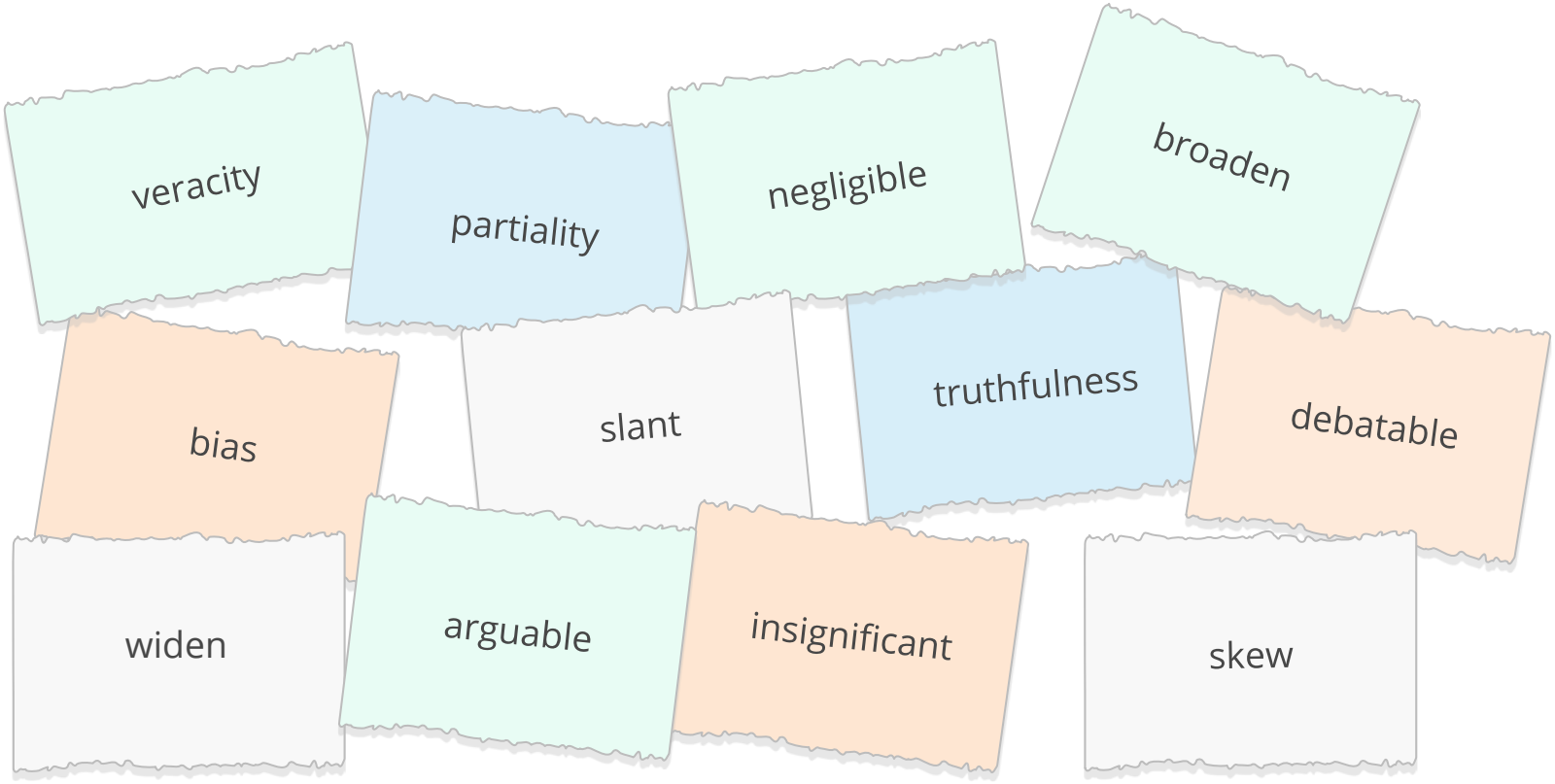
The next few slides will focus on training your listening comprehension

True or false?

	TRUE	FALSE
1. The effects of the filter bubble are certain.	☐	☐
2. Studies have found the impact of algorithms to be negligible.	☐	☐
3. We are three times more likely to befriend someone on social media with the same political views as us.	☐	☐
4. To correct your bias you should start with looking at a completely opposing viewpoint.	☐	☐
5. Fact-checking sites test the truthfulness of what you are reading.	☐	☐

Vocabulary

Match the vocabulary from the text with their synonyms below.



Are we skewing our perspective?

Do you think it is true that algorithms are widening the divisions in society, or are we doing it ourselves by choosing to skew our perspective?

Generational divides?

How much difference do you think there is between our grandparents choosing one type of newspaper and us getting one type of news on the internet?

Breaking through the filter bubble

Do you try to break out of your filter bubble?
In what ways do you do this?
Do you think the suggestions in the text make sense?

What do you think?

On balance, do you think it is a **positive** or a **negative** thing that we exist in a filter bubble?

Do you think there will be a time when we do not have filter bubbles?

Do you think filter bubbles existed in the past?

Search the internet

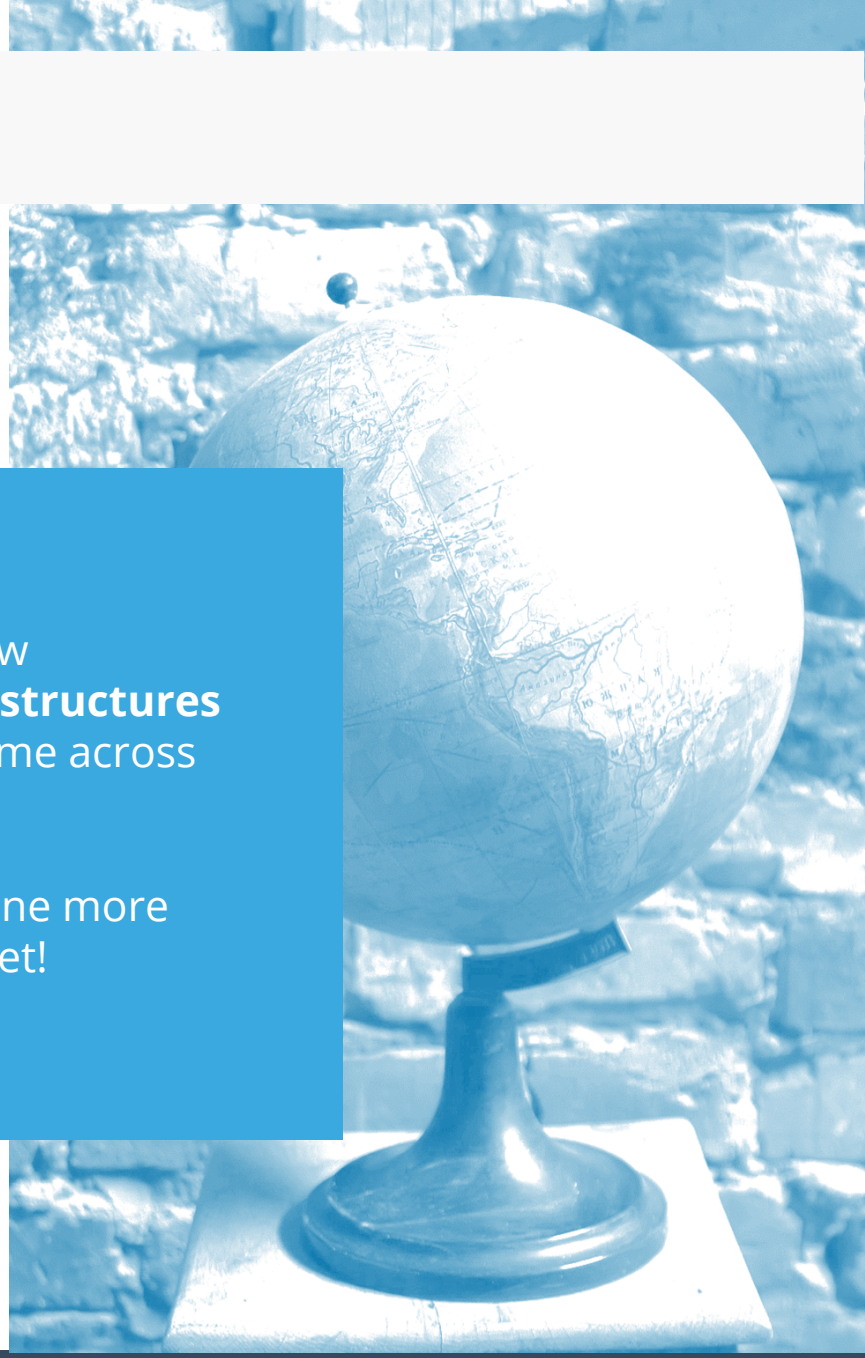
I think the effect is **negligible** because...

Try an experiment with your classmates or teacher.

Search for 'The USA' and see if you get different results from each other.

We have **huge differences** in our results...

Reflect on this lesson



Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary**, **phrases**, **language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!

Transcription

The effects of the filter bubble are **arguable**. Some believe that they are causing divisions in an already divided society to widen; when we hear nothing of the opposite viewpoint we will never be able to understand it. However, certain studies have found that the difference in search results for users of different political persuasions is **negligible**. Furthermore, in the case of social media, we are four times more likely to befriend someone who shares our views, which means that we are **skewing** the content ourselves, and it is not the fault of an **algorithm**.

If users are conscious about the filter bubble, there are certain things they can do to break through it. The first piece of advice offered is to start slow: thus, if you are left-leaning you should not launch straight into far-right sites to try to correct your **bias**. There are also fact-checking sites and apps available so that you can test the **veracity** of the news you are reading. Signing up for email newsletters is another way to incorporate opposing views into your life. Some newsletters are specifically designed to break away from the filter bubble and contain **diverse perspectives** on various topics from diets, celebrities and politics.

Answer key

Activity p. 9

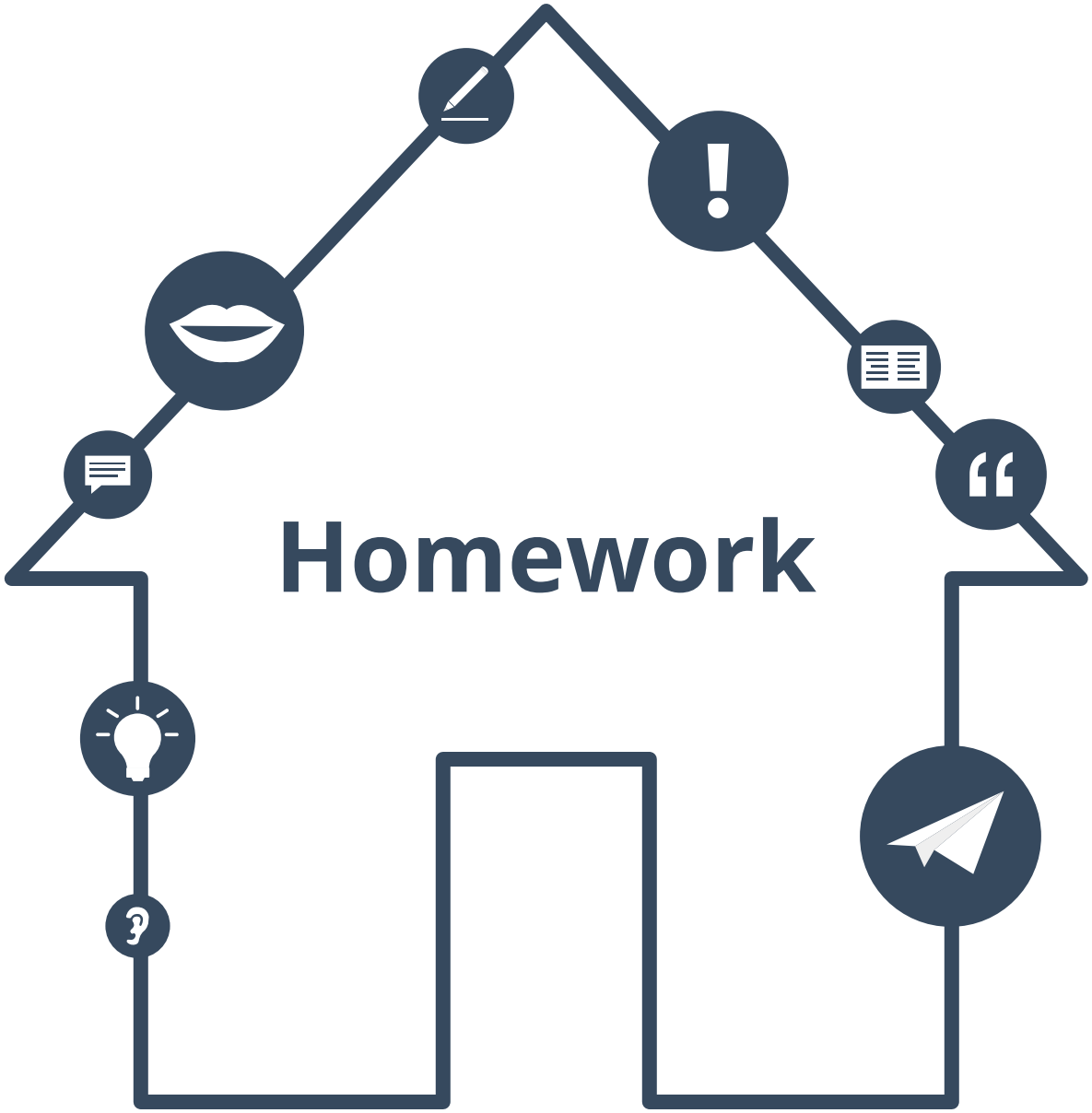
1. fall prey, 2. coining, 3. algorithms, 4. aligned

Activity p. 15

1. F, 2. T, 3. F, 4. F, 5. T

Activity p. 16

veracity – truthfulness, bias – partiality, broaden – widen, arguable – debatable, skew – slant, negligible - insignificant


Homework

Unscramble

A
existed or
Do you think
have always
filter bubbles
a new phenomenon?
are they

B
always
negative
filter bubbles
a
Are
thing?

Writing

Choose one of the questions on the previous page and answer it in about 120 words.

Homework answer key

Exercise p. 26

A. Do you think filter bubbles have always existed or are they a new phenomenon?

B. Are filter bubbles always a negative thing?

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