Teacher's notes

Distinguish facts and opinions

Special Edition
C21 ENGLISH FOR THE 21st CENTURY
A2 Elementary

Warm up

Tell the class a couple of simple facts – how you got to the school or university today, and how long the journey was, for example. Then express some opinions about the facts – whether the journey was boring or that you noticed some interesting people, for example. Establish the notion of facts and opinions.

Using the Factsheet

For this Worksheet, it is necessary that students see the Factsheet beforehand.

There are two possible ways to use the Factsheet:

1. Give students the Factsheet before the lesson, so they can read it at home and come to the lesson prepared to do the Worksheet. If you use this approach, start the lesson by checking that all students have read and understood the Factsheet, and answer any questions.
2. Give students the Factsheet at the beginning of the lesson and start by working through it with the students.

Theory to practice

1 Read the sentences and decide if they are facts or opinions.

Suggested answers

a Opinion
b Fact
c Opinion
d Fact
e Opinion
f Fact

2 Now read the explanations of the answers to Exercise 1.

- If you are doing the Factsheet in class, you can address these points as you elicit the answers from Exercise 1. See if any students disagree – they may well do, as the difference between fact and opinion is not always clear.

3 ▷ 01 Listen to two extracts. Which one has more facts, and which has more opinions?

Answers

a More facts
b More opinions

Transcript

▷ 01

a Mount Everest is the highest mountain on Earth. It is 8,848 metres, or 29,028 feet, above sea level. It is located in the Mahalangur section of the Himalayas. Half of Everest is in Nepal and half is in China. There are two main climbing routes: one from the south-east and one from the north. There is a sign for new climbers. The climbers set up a base camp at the bottom of the mountain. They wait for good weather before the climb to the top.

b I'm not sure I like her architecture. Sometimes I don't think her buildings fit with other buildings nearby. For example, the Serpentine Gallery, the building in the second photo, is certainly very interesting, with all its curves, but to me it looks strange next to the old building. They don't really go together.

4 Read the transcript from Exercise 3 and the explanations below.

- If you are doing the Factsheet in class, you can elicit the explanations when you are checking the answers to Exercise 3.

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5 ▷ 02 **Listen to another extract. Can you hear only facts, only opinions, or both facts and opinions?**

- Make sure students understand what they need to do. Play ▷ 02 and elicit the answer. Students have a chance to listen to the text for detail in Exercise 6, so you can just play it once at this stage and elicit any keywords or phrases they picked up, perhaps listing them in two categories (*Fact* and *Opinion*) on the board.

Answers

The text contains both facts and opinions.

Transcript

▷ 02

Paulo is a submarine chef. He cooks for 100 of his colleagues, three times a day. His food is healthy and delicious! It's very tiring, and submarines are cramped and smelly. But submarine chefs are well paid, and they have long holidays.

6 ▷ 02 **Listen again and read the transcript. Highlight the facts and the opinions.**

- Play ▷ 02 again for students to listen to as they read. You could do this exercise as a class by playing the audio once more and pausing after every phrase to elicit students' opinions. If students are working individually or in pairs, tell them to use two colours of highlighter or two different ways of highlighting text, e.g. circling and underlining, to distinguish the facts and the opinions.
- Possible answers are given. Discuss the reasons for each answer and elicit students' own opinions, as there may be legitimate disagreements. *Tiring*, *cramped*, *smelly*, *well paid* and *long* are all phrases that suggest an opinionated stance. For example, most people might agree that it's a tiring job, but a coal miner might not think so; and Paulo might not be well paid compared to a surgeon. However, students may want to make a case that some of these are essentially facts. Sometimes whether or not something is a fact or an opinion depends on the context and tone. For example, if someone said 'Submarine chefs are very well paid,' as a throwaway comment, we would think of what they said as essentially opinionated; but if the comment was part of a detailed comparison of how much different workers were paid, we might be more inclined to think of it as factual.

Possible answers

Phrases are highlighted as follows: facts
opinions

Paulo is a submarine chef. He cooks for 100 of his colleagues, three times a day. His food is healthy and delicious! It's very tiring, and submarines are cramped and smelly. But submarine chefs are well paid, and they have long holidays.

Using the Worksheet

Practice

1 **Does each sentence relate to facts or opinions?**

- Tell students to work individually. Then allow pairs time to compare answers. Suggest that students briefly discuss what they learnt from the Factsheet.

Answers

a Facts
b Facts
c Opinions
d Facts
e Opinions
f Facts
g Opinions

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2 **Are they facts or opinions? Mark each sentence F (fact) or O (opinion). Discuss your reasons with a partner.**

- Read the instructions with the class. Point out that there are both informal sentences from conversations and more formal sentences from lectures. Students will not hear the sentences.
- Discuss the first statement together as a class if necessary, and then tell students to work directly in pairs. Monitor to check how students are doing, and then conduct feedback.

Suggested answers

a O – This is a generalization which couldn't be intended as strictly factual. Some people don't watch football. Others might find watching Barcelona boring – or even painful, if they are on the losing side!

b F – The speaker could prove this.

c O – Other people might think some other places the speaker has visited are more cosmopolitan. *Cosmopolitan* has various connotations, and could be interpreted differently by different people.

d O – It is not necessarily easy for everyone.

e F – This could probably be proven or disproven, at least within certain limitations.

f F – This is a law.

g O – The speaker is probably right, but it's not really a fact – it's a statement of intention, which is much closer to being an opinion.

3 **03 Listen to Marcus talk about his studies. Answer the questions in pairs.**

- Explain that the class will now hear various extracts. Some express mainly facts, others mainly opinions, and the final ones both facts and opinions.
- Read the instructions and both questions with the class. Play **03** twice if necessary. Allow some time for students to compare answers.
- Ideally, show the transcript on the board to clarify answers.

Answers

a He mostly states facts.

b He really likes the lab sessions.

Transcript

03

My name's Marcus, and I'm a psychology student in my third year. In a typical week, I have about 15 contact hours. I have eight lectures and two seminars, and a lab session of three hours. The rest of the time I study in the library or at home. In a typical week, I study for 30 hours. I really like the lab sessions. We do experiments and then we write a lab report about it later.

4 **04 Listen to Faris talk about an architect. Answer the questions in pairs.**

- Work through as in Exercise 3. Play **04** once only.

Answers

a He mostly expresses opinions.

b They are positive.

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Transcript
▷ 04

I love her architecture. The designs are so original. They're very different from any other architect I know. I especially like her futuristic buildings, like the Cultural Centre in Azerbaijan. It looks just like something from the future. I think she's the most exciting architect today.

5 ▷ 04 **Listen again and fill in the gaps in Faris's opinions with one or two words.**

- Give students time to read the incomplete transcript before you play ▷ 04 again. Pause the recording if necessary. Students don't need to compare answers.
- Ideally, elicit the answers and write them onto a copy of the transcript on the board for clarity.

Answers

a love
b original
c especially like
d I think
e exciting

6 👥 ▷ 05 **Listen to Murat talk about people he knows. Note down two facts and two opinions. Compare notes with a partner.**

- Point out that this recording is easier than the last one, but the speaker expresses both facts and opinions. Play ▷ 05 and allow time for students to compare notes.
- Ideally, show the transcript on the board to clarify answers.

Possible answers

Facts That's my wife.
Her name's Hulya.
She's a music teacher.
The guy with a beard is my friend Karem.
He's a medical student in his last year at Ankara University.

Opinions She's a very good singer.
Karem's a very clever guy.

Transcript
▷ 05

Oh, that's my wife. Her name's Hulya and she's a music teacher. She's a very good singer. The guy with a beard is my friend Karem. Karem's a very clever guy. He's a medical student in his last year at Ankara University.

7 👥 ▷ 06 **Listen to Amir talk about his phone charger. Answer the questions in pairs.**

- Clarify *phone charger* if students have not seen the relevant lesson (Level 2, 3A). Point out that this recording is more challenging than the last one. Play ▷ 06 twice if necessary.
- Monitor as students listen to check their progress. Elicit a few suggestions to write on the board, but note that students will study the transcript closely in Exercise 8, so you can discuss in more detail there.

Answers

a He mostly expresses opinions.
b Students' own answers – there are various possibilities.

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Transcript
▷ 06

Everybody needs one of these. I always have it with me when I go out and use my smartphone a lot. I really like this model because it's very compact and slim. It means I can carry it in my laptop bag, or even in my jacket pocket. It works with all Android and Windows phones. I really like the design and the way the charging cable fits into the body of the charger. I think it's a really useful gadget.

8 **Read the transcript from Exercise 7. Highlight the facts and opinions with your partner.**

- Read the instructions with the class, and make sure students know what to do. Allow sufficient time and then use the board to ensure final feedback is clear. There are different possible interpretations.

Suggested answers

Phrases are highlighted as follows: facts
opinions

Everybody needs one of these. I always have it with me when I go out and use my smartphone a lot. I really like this model because it's very compact and slim. It means I can carry it in my laptop bag, or even in my jacket pocket. It works with all Android and Windows phones. I really like the design and the way the charging cable fits into the body of the charger. I think it's a really useful gadget.

9 ▷ 07 **Listen to a lecturer talk about multitasking. Is his aim to state facts or express an opinion?**

- Read the instructions with the class. Clarify *multitasking* if students have not seen the relevant lesson (Level 2, 10C). Play ▷ 07 once only.

Answer

To express an opinion.

Transcript
▷ 07

Mistake number three is multitasking. 'Multitasking' means doing more than one task at the same time. These days, we often do many things at once. For example, at home, you can have a snack, listen to music, play a computer game and message friends all at the same time. At work, multitasking can be a good thing. But don't overdo it. If you try to do too many things at the same time, you won't get anything done properly.

10 ▷ 07 **Listen again. Mark each point from the lecture F (fact) or O (opinion). Compare ideas in pairs.**

- Give students time to read the points before you play ▷ 07 again. Allow pairs time to compare thoughts and discuss in depth. Then discuss the answers as a class. Note that the answers to **d** and **e** are not totally clear: in **d**, students might say the use of *can* makes it a fact; equally **e**, while opinionated, is a statement that could be supported by evidence.

Possible answers

a O – By using *mistake*, the speaker clearly introduces an opinion.
b F – This is a definition.
c F – This is essentially a statement of fact, albeit one the speaker is calling into question.
d O – This is unsupported and arguably too controversial to be a fact.
e O – This sums up the speaker's stance.

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Reflect

11 **Discuss the questions.**

- Have a fairly brief whole-class discussion about what students learnt in the lesson. You might prefer to do this in L1. Answer any questions. Students could think about the Reflect questions later at home.

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