Unit 7: Exercise 7

Read the information. Choose the best paraphrases for the sentences from the article.

Being able to identify paraphrases is a key skill in the IELTS Reading test, so it is useful for you to practise this here.

It is widely known that a weakness (as well as a strength) of the internet is that it essentially allows anyone to publish anything. If, like a substantial majority of people, you get your news from social media, then the chances are that you are exposed to a daily dose of conspiracy theories and misleading news. And when it's all mixed in with reliable information from respectable and reputable media sources, few of us can really tell which is which with any certainty.

In fact, researchers at Columbia University, using their 'emergent rumour tracker', found that misinformation is equally as likely as genuine news to go viral. The phenomenon is by no means new. After coming under scrutiny, many internet giants began to review their policies with regard to the publication and subsequent removal of fake news. Facebook added a box at the top of its newsfeed to inform users how to deal with dubious stories that look as if they might not be true; if concerned, users can click on it and are taken to Facebook's help centre where they are told about various features frequently found in fake news items, such as misspellings and nonstandard onscreen formatting.

In order to confirm the ease with which fake stories can be not just spread online, but also used to generate income, Filippo Menczer deliberately created a website that would computer-generate gossip about celebrities. This had no factual basis whatsoever, as a disclaimer at the bottom of the page pointed out. The articles also contained advertisements. Sure enough, at the end of the month, Menczer received a cheque in the post, courtesy of the adverts hosted by his page. This was undeniable proof that polluting the internet with lies could actually make a tidy profit, which was the conclusion Menczer expected to reach.

Nowadays, this is well understood, and we have a whole new industry: fake news and digital misinformation. A lot of the work is done by bots – fake accounts created to look like real people, whose only aim is to generate advertising money. Yet, the mainstream IT industry is fighting back. Computer scientists at Indiana University have devised a program to identify whether the source of online content is a bot or a genuine human being.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1 The chances are that you are exposed to a daily dose of conspiracy theories and misleading news.

- ◯ It's likely that you are irritated by what you find online.
- ◯ You probably often see stories that are untrue.

2 The phenomenon is by no means new.

- ◯ This has been happening for some time.
- ◯ This is becoming increasingly common.

3 In order to confirm the ease with which fake stories can be not just spread online, but also used to generate income …

- ◯ In order to earn money when the stories reach more people …
- ◯ In order to find out how easily these stories are shared and earn money …

4 This was undeniable proof that polluting the internet with lies could actually make a tidy profit, which was the conclusion Menczer expected to reach.

- ◯ Menczer found a way that he could make money without doing anything illegal.
- ◯ Menczer was right that spreading untrue stories online could give him a better income.

LIVEWORKSHEETS