Correcting misconceptions.

1) Choose words from list below to fit into each sentence. Only one final solution should be attempted. Note: these sentences are useful for email or oral debate.

nonsense / actually / fact / matter / granted / said / wives / load / misconception / actual / support / somebody / misinformed / true

a) It is often ( 1.                   ) working longer hours would lead to higher productivity. But actually,

b) People often say there's a rift between management and staff. But in ( 2.             ),

c) It's said we don't listen to what the customer really wants. ( 3.                   )

d) There are people who think that higher wages would motivate staff. In ( 4.                ) fact,

e) I'm sorry but you've been ( 5.                   ). What you're saying is just not true.

f) I've heard there's going to be a strike. Is it ( 6.                   )?

g) ( 7.                   ) told me the software has a bug. Is that correct?

h) That's absolute ( 8.                   ). It's not true at all.

i) That's a ( 9.                   ) of rubbish. The real truth is...

j) We take it for ( 10.                   ) that only the best people get promoted. In reality,

k) You may have heard that the morning coffee break is going to be axed. However, the truth of the ( 11.                   ) is...

l) There is no evidence to ( 12.                   ) that theory.

m) It is a popular ( 13.                   ) that working from home is better for everybody.

n) I think that's just an old ( 14.                   )' tale.

2) Analysis. General questions and activities for discussion and practice.

a) When we state the source of some information we have, there are many different ways to say this. eg. "It is often said..." What other similar expressions are listed above?

b) The meaning of the word "actually" can be confusing. How is it used in sentences a) and c) above and also in the phrase "in actual fact" in sentence d)? Does "actually" have other uses/meanings?

c) You're going to discuss a controversial point. Ask your teacher for instructions.
Teacher’s notes.
(Time for activity: 40 mins approx. Level: intermediate.)

Correcting misconceptions. (Context: email or debate.)

Correct answers to question 1.
1. said
2. fact
3. Actually
4. actual
5. misinformed
6. true
7. Somebody
8. nonsense
9. load
10. granted
11. matter
12. support
13. misconception
14. wives

Answers to question 2.
a) Expressions: People often say, It's said, There are people who think, I've heard, Somebody told me, We take it for granted that, You may have heard that, It is a popular misconception that.

You may like to introduce and explain the phrase "I've heard through the grapevine that... ." It may be useful for the debate at the end.

b) The word "actually" can be very useful for email writing and oral debate (meetings). The meaning in the examples above is to show a contrast between what is true and what somebody believes. You may explain that it can be used mid-sentence too, eg. "working longer hours can actually be counterproductive."

In a similar way, "actually" emphasises something we want to say: "Actually, I hate working from home."

It also serves the purpose of correcting somebody but in a polite way: "Actually, I really feel you're mistaken there." (This is not formal language.)

Its polite use is also extended to saying things people might not like to hear: "Sorry, I can't help you now. I'm actually quite busy at the moment."

Intermediate students will find this word quite difficult to use properly. It's best not to over-correct too much!

c) Choose a subject your students know about or are interested in. You may like to choose an idea from the sentences above such as "It is a popular misconception that working from home is better for everybody." Organise students into two groups or have a class debate. Ask students to actively look at the expressions they have studied and try to use them when expressing their ideas.