Using Intertextuality as an Approach to Improve EFL Students' Critical Writing
The Case of Second Year LMD Students at the Department of Letters and English Language-Kasdi Merbah University Ouargla-Algeria

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Abstract
Intertextuality is considered as a significant approach that is based on linking different kinds of texts and discourses. It is utilized to create an intertextual relation between ideas and perspectives which can aid in broadening the readers' and the writers' background knowledge. Since critical writing is an important skill in EFL classes, teachers struggle to find a method to teach it. For this reason, the present paper aims at investigating the effect of using intertextuality as an approach to improve EFL students' critical writing. To accomplish the research's main objective, the two researchers adopt a quasi-experimental method to confirm the causal link between the two variables. To collect the research data, a pre-test and a post-test are conducted with a sample of twenty five second year LMD students at the Department of Letters and English Language, Kasdi Merbah University-Ouargla, Algeria. The research outcomes reveal the effectiveness of intertextuality in improving EFL learners' critical writing.
Key-words: critical writing, intertextuality, EFL learners, text, discourse.

ملخص
يعتبر التناص منهجا مهما يعتمد على ربط أنواع مختلفة من النصوص والخطابات حيث يتم استخدامه لإنشاء علاقة نصية بين مختلف الأفكار ووجهات النظر التي تساهم في توسيع الخلفية المعرفية للقراء والكتاب. ونظرا لأهمية الكتابة النقدية في فصول اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، يسابق الأساتذة الزمن لإيجاد طرق كفيلة بتحسينها. من هذا المنطلق تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى التحقيق في تأثير استخدام التناص كنهج لتحسين الكتابة النقدية للطلاب الجامعيين بجامعة قاصدي مرباح ورقلة. ولتحقيق الهدف الرئيسي للدراسة يتبنى الباحثان منهجا شبه تجريبي لإنشاء علاقة بين المتغيرين واختبار الفرضية. ولغرض جمع البيانات تم إجراء اختبارين قبلي وبعدي على عينة مكونة من 25 طالبا في السنة الثانية ل م د بقسم الآداب واللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة ورقلة. وقد كشفت النتائج النهائية للبحث عن فعالية التناص في تحسين هذا النوع من الكتابة لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.
الكلمات المفتاحية: الكتابة النقدية، التناص، متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، النص، الخطاب

1. INTRODUCTION

In EFL classrooms, teachers focus more on teaching the language skills. Writing in this context is an important skill since it aids learners to express their thoughts in an adequate time and a well-structured way. In this sense, unlike the other skills, writing indeed is a difficult task since it needs time and efforts to improve it. When students write their texts, they involve themselves in multiple processes such as generating content, ordering information, translating information into language, checking grammatical rules and spelling mistakes. Thus, active learners should not only focus on writing itself, but also they have to learn from these steps and make a relation between them. They should have more time to think, reflect, prepare state, make mistakes and find out alternative solutions (Scrivener, 2005). Critical writing, in this case, requires the involvement of these cognitive competencies since it is based mainly on arguing, judging, evaluating, solving problems and constructing cause/effect relations.

Teachers in EFL contexts usually consider grammatical accuracy and form-instruction priority when teaching writing skills. However, this kind of instruction is inadequate in the case of critical writing teaching when learners are assigned to involve their linguistic competencies and think critically to write their texts. Critical writing, in this sense, is a challenging task. This difficulty stems mainly from the need of specific knowledge and skills that are based on critical thinking skills (Oostdam, 2005). Since critical writing is a productive skill, it emerges from the controversial texts that learners read. These kinds of texts can promote the learners' abilities in writing their own texts (Harmer, 2001). In this case, adopting intetextuality in EFL classes as an approach can strengthen students' critical thinking as well as their critical writing. For that reason, the present paper aims to investigate the impact of using intertextuality on improving the critical writing of second year LMD students at the Department of Letters and English Language- Kasdi Merbah University- Ouargla. It is designed to answer the following research question:

- To what extent does intertextuality affect the critical writing of second year LMD students at the Department of Letters and English Language-Kasdi Merbah University Ouargla?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical writing is a kind of writing that demands the use of information to argue and prove a point of view. Unlike descriptive writing which is based mainly on listing and describing information, critical writing tends to evaluate, analyse and interpret it to argue a point of view (Wagner, 2002). It is considered as a way for learners to discover and ameliorate their understanding of a certain topic as well as a means for teachers to evaluate their students' comprehension and engagement with the selected topic. For that reason, critical writing is a significant assignment in writing classes in

which EFL learners tend to answer a definite question, persuading readers that this answer is correct and supporting their point of view with clear facts and evidence that form their academic arguments (Vyncke, 2012).

In order to write critically, EFL learners are assigned to develop a strong argument or claim. The latter is a statement that expresses a point of view or a belief about a certain issue (Allen, 2005). It is regarded as a situation that is underpinned by clear thoughts and rational evidences with a relation to strong facts. Arguments, in this case, hardly ascertain the validity of the conclusion, however, they prove its probability (Maybery, 2005). In this sense, an argument is a way of reasoning that looks for constructing a thesis or a claim via providing reasons for accepting the conclusion. Thus, it is very important to write an argument that should contain a thesis and different supporting reasons (Barnet & Bedau, 2014). Writing good arguments, in this case, is mainly based on taking a strong standpoint, providing good reasons and supporting facts to defend the position, and acknowledging the opposing arguments and perspectives (Anker, 2010). On doing that, EFL learners should be involved in different cognitive processes such as analysing, interpreting and evaluating. For that reason, intertextuality, or intertexual reading is a suitable way to broaden the learners' background knowledge and aid them to write critically.

Intertextuality is the process of including words or expressions from one text in another in a variety of different ways. Also, it can be a direct or an indirect quotation or just alluding what hearers or readers in the knowledge realize as words from different sources (Gee, 2005). Bazeman (2004) defines intertextuality as "the explicit and implicit relations that a text or an utterance has to prior, contemporary and potential texts" (p. 86). He explains that through those kinds of links a text provokes a representation of the discourse situation and the textual resources that sustain the situation and how the present text locates itself and draws on other texts. In this sense, intertextuality is a significant feature in every text, and it is about the interaction of various relationships between them in which one text dwells and echoes within another to create a new discourse (Mulatsih & Rifqi, 2012). Intertextuality was discussed by the poststructuralist, Julia Kristava (1973), who depicted this concept as the relationship between the text, the writer and the reader (Armstrong & Newman, 2011). She proposed that intertextuality existed as a universal phenomenon that illustrates the communicative interconnections between a text and a context (Allen, 2000). Then, intertextuality was shifted from cultural literary studies to applied linguistics by means of Beaugrande and Dessler's Standards of Textuality (1981) in which they focused on aspects that make the production of a new discourse depend upon one or more previously encountered discourses (Peter, 2015).

In EFL classrooms, intertextuality can be regarded as a teaching approach in which teachers expose their learners to multiple texts from multiple genres that are connected by single threads or intertextual instructions (Finley, 2015). In doing so, learners have the opportunity to improve their background knowledge, make connections across texts and develop multiple perspectives and their critical thinking (Armstrong & Newman, 2011). In the review of literature, many researches are conducted to investigate the implementation of intertextuaity in EFL classrooms. Armstrong & Newman (2011) adopted the intertextual approach to build a schematic knowledge for teaching reading in high schools. Also, Multasih & Rifqi (2012) discussed the effect of using genre and intertextuality-based approaches on students' creative writing abilities. Their results proved the effectiveness of the two approaches in enhancing learners' creative writing.

Moreover, Ahangari & Sepehran (2014) investigated the impact of intertextuality on Iranian EFL learners' critical writing. They harmonized between visual and print texts to construct an intertextual relation. Their outcomes revealed the importance of intertextuality in improving this skill. On the same way, Peter (2015) discussed the use of intertextuality in essay writing. He indicated the frequent use of intertextuality in this kind of writing. Furthermore, Borges (2015) tried to cast light on raising the awareness of intertextuality to develop ESL reading and writing skills through lesson plan designing. Last but not least, Larsen (2018) discussed the impact of implementing the intertextual approach in developing reading literary texts in English among EFL student teachers. The outcomes of the research revealed the significance of intertextuality in enhancing metacognitive strategies for reading skills.

The present paper is thus an attempt to investigate the impact of integrating intertextuality in teaching critical writing for second year LMD students at the Department of Letters and English Language, Kasdi Merbah University- Ouargla.

3. METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research question, a quasi-experiment or one group pretest-posttest is selected as a method of the study. It is very appropriate since it seeks to construct a relationship between two variables regarding causation, i.e. the change in the dependent variable (critical writing) occurs after introducing the independent variable (intertextuality) (Marczyk et al., 2005). On the basis of the chosen method, the two researchers selected randomly 25 second year LMD students of English to represent the whole population and to ensure the consistency of the study. Written Comprehension and Expression is an important module in their syllabus and they sometimes fail when they write critically. In this sense, the experimental study consists of a pretest, two training sessions and a posttest.

The pretest is conducted to diagnose the learners' level in critical writing before introducing the treatment. The learners are instructed to write an essay answering a controversial question about the internet in 90 minutes (Appendix A). Then, the training sessions are conducted after getting the pretest results. They are designed regarding the weaknesses and the difficulties of learners in critical writing. Multiple texts, which are represented by a picture about internet and four texts (Appendix B), are used in these sessions. The posttest (Appendix C) is the last step in the experiment. It is administered on the basis of the training sessions and it shows the extent to which the suggested lessons are efficient to improve the learners' critical writing.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After conducting the pretest, the training sessions and the posttest, the two researchers corrected the selected students' drafts and classified their scores in Table 1 which shows the results of the pretest and the posttest:

Table 1: Pretest and Posttest Results

Students	Pretest Score	Posttest Score
S1	04	06
S2	05	06
S3	08	09
S4	03	05
S5	11	12
S6	09	10
S7	08	10
S8	11	13
S9	04	05
S10	09	09
S11	09	10
S12	04	04
S13	11	12
S14	09	11
S15	03	05
S16	07	09
S17	06	09
S18	10	11
S19	07	08
S20	07	09
S21	05	08
S22	05	06
S23	08	10
S24	06	06
S25	04	07

Table 1 reveals the change in the learners' scores in the pretest and the posttest in which it is clearly observed that the pretest scores range between 4 and 10; however, those in the posttest are between 6 and 13. In this sense, learners' results indicate the difference between learners' proficiency and awareness of critical writing before and after adopting the intertextuality approach.

In order to compare the results of the two tests, the standard deviation (SD) statistical analysis is used. According to Marczyk et al. (2005), standard deviation is "a measure of variability indicating the average that scores vary from the mean" (p. 92). It is calculated according to the following equation:

$$\mathbf{SD} = \sqrt{\frac{(X-M)^2}{N}}$$

***X*: Each score**
***M*: Mean**
***N*: Student's Number**

Table 2: Experiment's Scores

	PRETEST	POSTTEST
N Valid	25	25
Mean	6,92	8,40
Median	7,00	9,00
Std. Deviation	2,402	2,517

Table 2 shows that there is a difference between students' scores in the pretest and the posttest in terms of Mean and SD. In the pretest, the mean is 6.92; however, in the posttest is 8.40. Thus, one can maintain that students' scores in the pretest are lower than those in the posttest. Also, these results indicate that the training sessions yielded positive results and improved the learners' critical writing: students learned the nature of an argument, how to make relation between texts' arguments, how to support their arguments, and how to acknowledge the opposing arguments. The effectiveness of those sessions stems from the correct evaluation of the pretest that diagnoses the learners' weaknesses when they write their arguments. Also, this reveals the success of the different sessions' stages in developing the students' way of writing and broadening their schematic knowledge via exposing them to multiple kinds of texts. On the other hand, SD values in both the pretest and the posttest are close to the mean. Therefore, we can conclude that the level of students is not different within the same group which helps teachers in designing lessons that fit with the all students' level.

5. CONCLUSION

The present paper was an attempt to investigate the impact of implementing the intertextuality approach in teaching critical writing to second year 'Licence' students at the Department of Letters and English Language, Kasdi Merbah University- Ouargla. To accomplish our main objective, the two researchers conducted a quasi-experimental method on randomly selected twenty-five students. The adopted method consisted of a pretest, training sessions and a posttest in which weaknesses in critical writing were taken into consideration, and learners were exposed to multiple kinds of texts. The final results indicated the effectiveness of the suggested training sessions and proved the efficiency of intertextuality in enhancing EFL learners' critical writing. On the basis of these outcomes, it is recommended to focus more on teaching this kind of writing in order to enhance learners' critical thinking skills. Also, it is very useful to expose students to multiple kinds of texts (printed and visual) and encourage them to make intertextual relations between their arguments to develop their critical reading and to produce their own texts. Lastly, since the present paper proved the effectiveness of intertextuality in improving students' critical writing, it is recommended to integrate this approach in teaching writing skills.

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7. APPENDICES

Appendix A: The Pretest

In no more than 250 words, write an essay answering the following question: Do you think that social media are dangerous for teenagers?

Appendix B: Lessons Materials

STOPPING YOUTH VIOLENCE: AN INSIDE JOB

(1) Every year, nearly 1 million twelve- to nineteen-year-olds are murdered, robbed, or assaulted—many by their peers—and teenagers are more than twice as likely as adults to become the victims of violence, according to the Children's Defense Fund. Although the problem is far too complex for any one solution, teaching young people conflict-resolution skills—that is, nonviolent techniques for resolving disputes—seems to help. To reduce youth violence, conflict-resolution skills should be taught to all children before they reach junior high school.

(2) First and most important, young people need to learn nonviolent ways of dealing with conflict. In a dangerous society where guns are readily available, many youngsters feel they have no choice but to respond to an insult or an argument with violence. If they have grown up seeing family members and neighbors react to stress with verbal or physical violence, they may not know that other choices exist. Robert Steinback, a former *Miami Herald* columnist who worked with at-risk youth in Miami, writes that behavior like carrying a weapon or refusing to back down gives young people "the illusion of control," but what they desperately need is to learn real control—for example, when provoked, to walk away from a fight.

(3) Next, conflict-resolution programs have been shown to reduce violent incidents and empower young people in a healthy way. Many programs and courses around the country are teaching teens and preteens to work through disagreements without violence. Tools include calmly telling one's own side of the story and listening to the

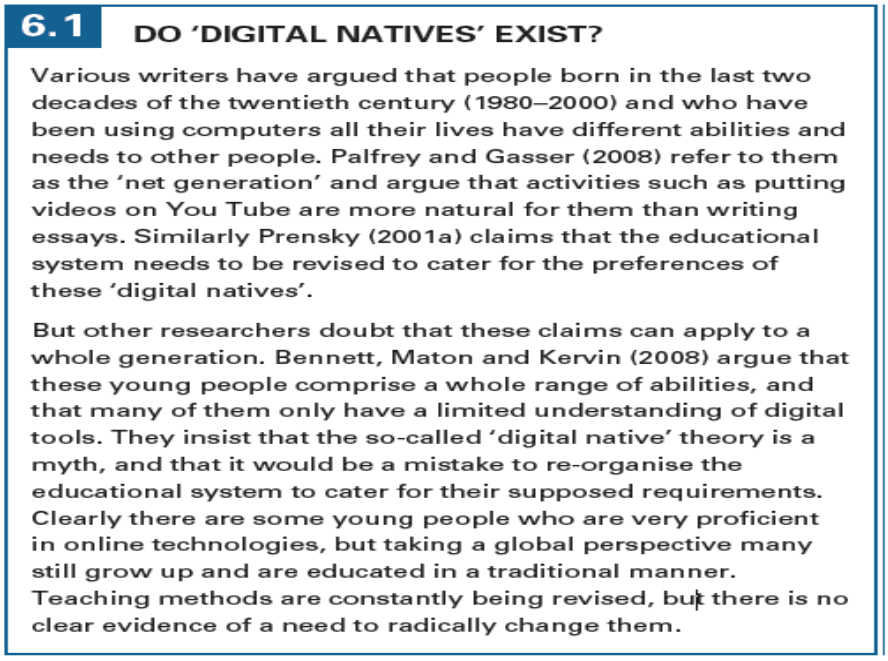
Luz Rivera, who said in a phone interview that fewer violent school incidents have been reported since the course began. Although conflict resolution is useful at any age, experts agree that students should first be exposed before they are hit by the double jolts of hormones and junior high school.

(4) Finally, although opponents claim that this is a "Band-Aid" solution that does not address the root causes of teen violence—poverty, troubled families, bad schools, and drugs, to name a few—in fact, conflict-resolution training saves lives now. The larger social issues must be addressed, but they will take years to solve, whereas teaching students new attitudes and "people skills" will empower them immediately and serve them for a lifetime. For instance, fourteen-year-old Verna, who once called herself Vee Sinister, says that Ms. Rivera's course has changed her life: "I learned to stop and think before my big mouth gets me in trouble. I use the tools with my mother, and guess what? No more screaming at home."

(5) The violence devastating Verna's generation threatens everyone's future. One proven way to help youngsters protect themselves from violence is conflict-resolution training that begins early. Although it is just one solution among many, this solution taps into great power: the hearts, minds, and characters of young people.

Fawcett, S. (2012). *Evergreen: A Guide to Writing with Readings* (9th Ed). Boston: Wordsworth (p.175).

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6.1 DO 'DIGITAL NATIVES' EXIST?

Various writers have argued that people born in the last two decades of the twentieth century (1980–2000) and who have been using computers all their lives have different abilities and needs to other people. Palfrey and Gasser (2008) refer to them as the 'net generation' and argue that activities such as putting videos on You Tube are more natural for them than writing essays. Similarly Prensky (2001a) claims that the educational system needs to be revised to cater for the preferences of these 'digital natives'.

But other researchers doubt that these claims can apply to a whole generation. Bennett, Maton and Kervin (2008) argue that these young people comprise a whole range of abilities, and that many of them only have a limited understanding of digital tools. They insist that the so-called 'digital native' theory is a myth, and that it would be a mistake to re-organise the educational system to cater for their supposed requirements. Clearly there are some young people who are very proficient in online technologies, but taking a global perspective many still grow up and are educated in a traditional manner. Teaching methods are constantly being revised, but there is no clear evidence of a need to radically change them.

Baily, S. (2011). *Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students* (3rd Ed.). London and New York: Routledege (p.107).

7.1 **The growth of the world wide web**

In the history of civilisation there have been many significant developments, **such as the invention of the wheel, money and the telephone,** but **the development of the internet is perhaps the most crucial of all.** In the space of a few years the world wide web has linked buyers in New York to sellers in Mumbai and teachers in Berlin to students in Cairo, **so that few people can imagine life without it.**

It is estimated that over 70 per cent of North Americans, for instance, have internet access, and this figure is steadily increasing. **Physical shops are under threat, as growing numbers shop online.** In areas such as travel it is now impossible to buy tickets on certain airlines except on the internet. The web also links together millions of individual traders who sell to buyers through websites such as Ebay.

Beyond the commercial sphere, the internet is also critically important in the academic world. A huge range of journals and reports are now available electronically, meaning that researchers can access a vast amount of information through their computer screens, **speeding up their work and allowing them to produce better quality research.** In addition, email permits academics to make effortless contact with fellow-researchers all over the world, which also assists them to improve their output.

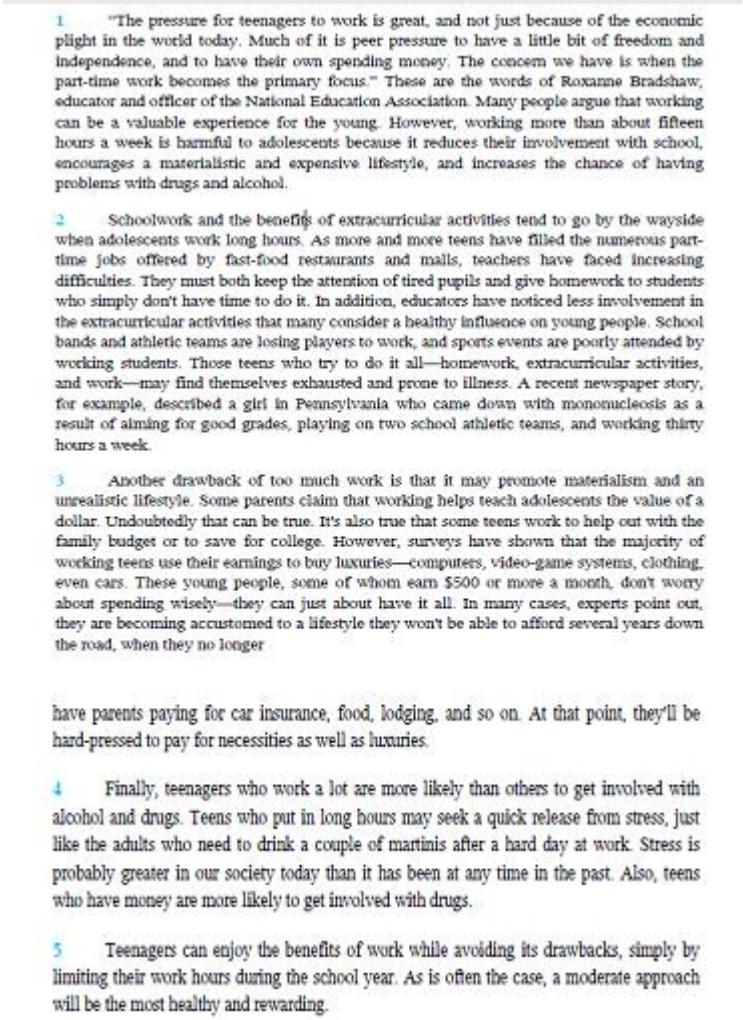
There is, of course, a darker side to this phenomenon, which is the use criminals have made of their ability to trade illegal or fraudulent products over the internet, with little control over their activities. But such behaviour is hugely compensated for by the benefits that have been obtained by both individuals and businesses. **We are reaching a situation in which all kinds of information are freely available to everyone, which must lead to a happier, healthier and richer society.**

Baily, S. (2011). *Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students* (3rd Ed.). London and New York: Routledege (p.28)



Fox, J. (2013). *19 Essays about How Internet Is Changing Our Life*. Spain: BBVA (p.10).

Teenagers and Jobs



1 "The pressure for teenagers to work is great, and not just because of the economic plight in the world today. Much of it is peer pressure to have a little bit of freedom and independence, and to have their own spending money. The concern we have is when the part-time work becomes the primary focus." These are the words of Roxanne Bradshaw, educator and officer of the National Education Association. Many people argue that working can be a valuable experience for the young. However, working more than about fifteen hours a week is harmful to adolescents because it reduces their involvement with school, encourages a materialistic and expensive lifestyle, and increases the chance of having problems with drugs and alcohol.

2 Schoolwork and the benefits of extracurricular activities tend to go by the wayside when adolescents work long hours. As more and more teens have filled the numerous part-time jobs offered by fast-food restaurants and malls, teachers have faced increasing difficulties. They must both keep the attention of tired pupils and give homework to students who simply don't have time to do it. In addition, educators have noticed less involvement in the extracurricular activities that many consider a healthy influence on young people. School bands and athletic teams are losing players to work, and sports events are poorly attended by working students. Those teens who try to do it all—homework, extracurricular activities, and work—may find themselves exhausted and prone to illness. A recent newspaper story, for example, described a girl in Pennsylvania who came down with mononucleosis as a result of aiming for good grades, playing on two school athletic teams, and working thirty hours a week.

3 Another drawback of too much work is that it may promote materialism and an unrealistic lifestyle. Some parents claim that working helps teach adolescents the value of a dollar. Undoubtedly that can be true. It's also true that some teens work to help out with the family budget or to save for college. However, surveys have shown that the majority of working teens use their earnings to buy luxuries—computers, video-game systems, clothing, even cars. These young people, some of whom earn $500 or more a month, don't worry about spending wisely—they can just about have it all. In many cases, experts point out, they are becoming accustomed to a lifestyle they won't be able to afford several years down the road, when they no longer

have parents paying for car insurance, food, lodging, and so on. At that point, they'll be hard-pressed to pay for necessities as well as luxuries.

4 Finally, teenagers who work a lot are more likely than others to get involved with alcohol and drugs. Teens who put in long hours may seek a quick release from stress, just like the adults who need to drink a couple of martinis after a hard day at work. Stress is probably greater in our society today than it has been at any time in the past. Also, teens who have money are more likely to get involved with drugs.

5 Teenagers can enjoy the benefits of work while avoiding its drawbacks, simply by limiting their work hours during the school year. As is often the case, a moderate approach will be the most healthy and rewarding.

Langan, J. (2008). *College Writing Skills with Readings* (7th Ed). New York: McCraw-Hill Companies (p.373).

Appendix C: The Posttest

In no more than 250 words, write an essay answering the following question: Do you think that internet increases violence in society?