

Short Form Content for Big Minds: Teaching Post-Millennials Phonetics Using YouTube Music Clips

Kassim Boudjelal Safir

ABSTRACT

Boredom, daydreaming, attention-getting, chatting, rebellion, fighting back, active resistance, cheating, self-defeating attitude. This is a short list of the recurrent symptoms tertiary post-millennial students communicate when exposed to canonical dry academic content. Students learning phonetics through the outmoded content-based approach have shown the same verbal /nonverbal behaviours. Edutainment and process-based learning are rarely used in Algerian schools. No wonder YouTube -as a short-form content provider- has become one of the most serious competitors of schools worldwide. A recorded experimental study, followed by a satisfactory scale, was used to assess the students' performances and interests. The results showed higher scores of students using YouTube music clips as an edutaining process-based approach. A surprising list of nonverbal (micro) signs confirmed the hypothesis. Students from the experimental group as compared with the control group, asked for more lessons to better their comprehension of phonetics, a thing that we couldn't predict. The potential practical implications of the following paper are multiple. The first one is what could be called the "pedagogisation" of entertaining tools like YouTube and their inclusion in schools to learn academic content. The second would be the identification of all the possible types of (micro) signs students would send when exposed to boring vs. interesting content or/and when applying a methodology to teach theoretical content as in the cases of phonetics, grammar, or even literature. Last but not least, the exploration of semiotic signs YouTube singers would send to the receivers i.e., students could be of paramount importance.

Keywords: Edutainment, Pedagogisation, Post-Millennials, Phonetics, Micro Signals, Youtube.

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K. B. Safir*

Mustapha Stanbouli University, Mascara.
Algeria.

(e-mail: safireading@yahoo.com)

**Corresponding Author*

I. INTRODUCTION

"Old schoolteachers suck, Pink rocks", is an anonymous Facebook comment of one of the post-millennial students who participated in the experiment. This statement confirms one of the golden rules in foreign language learning. There is no harm to have fun and play seriously with languages (Lillemyr, 2020). Boredom, daydreaming, and passive resistance to learning -to name only these- are simply unheard yet deafening loud nonverbal messages teachers must listen to. It seems paradoxical, but this is the truth. Old schoolteachers who try helplessly to teach post-millennials the way they have been taught are probably living in the 80s.

Teachers' persistence to use "their" obsolete approaches based on content rather than process has proved their failure to update the pedagogical and didactical tools they are using. 17% of the cheating cases, in the Algerian language departments, were found to be related to phonetics and phonology exams according to a former head of an English department in the province of Algiers. Students were usually asked to transcribe words or passages, to put stress on words

and sentences, identify words with central vowels, completing definitions, fill in the gaps, completing diagrams, identifying false/true statements, mentioning the differences between auditory phonetics, acoustic phonetics and articulatory phonetics, or defining terms like glottalling, smoothing, assimilation, elision to mention only these. And guess what, phonetics exams subjects are written, never oral/spoken...! Babies don't learn phonetics; they learn pronunciation through listening and babbling as a form of primitive speech, i.e., imitating their mothers (Speidel & Nelson, 2012). Young Immigrants can learn pronunciation within one or two years in a foreign country and can reach semi-nativeness if they stay longer than two years. (Luisa & Pilar, 2003)

Those kinds of content-based exams have significantly contributed to the confusion of the students and the destruction of their self-confidence and thus self-esteem inciting them to "find" a solution to their seemingly academic issue: cheating. Many brilliant students thought that they were not. Written exams alone can never reflect the real students' potential, let alone the exclusively content

“basedness”. “I have never thought that I would need to learn and regurgitate phonetics rules like place of articulation, manner of articulation, fricatives and affricates to talk with airport foreign officials, taxi drivers, hotel personnel and ordinary people in the street to ask for direction in a foreign country like the USA or England.”, remarked one of my brilliant students who chose to become an agricultural engineer after completing his master’s degree.

I have personally tried with some of my friends -and colleagues- to answer some of the phonetics questions asked in exams as a part of this study. Guess what, we all flunked it. Were some students better than us? No, they have simply learnt -sorry, “parroted”- their lessons for the D Day. We got the average too when we were undergraduates. What happened? We’ve simply “deleted”, yes deleted like a computer, all the useless rules from our minds.

The human brain is remarkably selective. Our brain retains the most relevant information and suppresses the irrelevant to lessen the cognitive load and archives the less relevant ones. We can never forget our own names but can forget classmates’ names we met in kindergarten. When people do not care about things, they tend to forget them for they are NOT -or no longer- relevant. A linguistics teacher will probably flunk a mathematics test. Likewise, a mathematics teacher will probably flunk a linguistics test. Teachers care about their specialties. Nothing else really matters for them.

The IPA (International Phonetics Association) exams include three parts, written, dictation, and oral. Over-relying on written exams only is counter-productive. Therefore, and in order to maintain a pedagogical equilibrium, the IPA opted for a variety of tests as mentioned above. The written test concerns phonetic transcription of a passage in English, and three theoretical questions related to transcription as well. The second test concerns dictation that lasts for 45 minutes. It tests the capacity to decode a language properly. The last test is oral, which permits students to express themselves in 10 to 15 minutes. Teachers pay attention to the students’ articulation of sounds and performance of intonation patterns; description of vowel and consonant articulations and intonation patterns. (IPA, nd)

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Short Form Content

Aesop (c. 620–564 BCE), is the father of short form content. His 100 words short stories were, and probably are, the most famous traditional stories ever. They are amazingly short, entertaining, effective, informative, educational, and above all moralizing for any human being on earth. His legend is still surviving in spite of the rude competition of long form content like novels, and classical /modern short stories. Who didn’t read the fable of the Turtle and the Hare? (Aesop, nd)

It took only five words for Vardaman Bundren to tell the story of his mother’s death in William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*. It took only three words for Nike to tell us that we’ve got to practice sport. It took only ONE word. Yes, one word for Charles Dickens to tell us that his story is happening in a city called “London” with all the implications that this word would reveal to different readers. It took only ONE letter for

God to tell a -till now- unknown story “Qaf” or “ق” in Arabic, Sourate 50. Short forms were everywhere, before the digitalization of traditional content. It was based on brevity and edutainment in the same time. This briefness of style seems a child’s play when compared to the 1000 words essay, but they are not that easy. Conciseness is an art before being a writing rule for the APA.

According to Shane Barker, the digital marketing consultant, “Short-form content is characterized by a word count of 1200 or less” (Short, 2022). SMS, e-mails, blogs, social media posts like images and videos are examples of short forms. Videos on YouTube can therefore be classified as short form content. It is true, long form content is getting higher performance metrics on net search engines. Long form content is that content that includes the detailed and lengthy blog posts, evergreen pages, guides / tutorials, whitepapers / eBooks, webinars/virtual events, and Pillar pages (Varadoulis, 2020). This type of content is time consuming and often requires a large amount of resources. However, the results can be impressive and rewarding. Post-millennials are in the majority short form content consumers. Facebook and YouTube can confirm that tendency. The strength of evergreen content is its capacity to resist the troughs and peaks that short form content goes through. There is a constant level of sustained interest according to Varagouli.

As opposed to short content, the evergreen content has many advantages. “It covers topics that do not have an expiration date, The most popular content formats that fall into this category include: How-To Guides, Listicles, Top Tips, Product Reviews, Informational Long-Form Guides, Pillar Pages, Video, Interviews, Buying Guides, Glossaries, FAQs, Case Studies, Research Studies, Checklists, Testimonials, Tools and Calculators” (Varagouli, 2020). Sometimes short-form content cannot be considered as evergreen. The real test of content should go through is “evergreenness” characterized by a sustained interest and increasing performance.

B. Post-Millennials

Weird are our schools today, and strange are those teachers trying to teach post millennial students who don’t want to be taught but simply to learn “something” new every day. The classroom situations are strangely proverbial. Are we leading our children to school the same way a man would lead his horses to the river to make them drink? “You may lead a horse to the river, but you can’t make it drink” (Anonymous, nd). You may lead children to school, but you can’t make them learn. “Teach me if you can!”, seems to say every student without uttering a single word. They simply show passive resistance to our obsolete content that even a child of five can find today in Google.

Can classroom dinosaurs teach horses? So, why do I need to go to school when I’ve got Google?, asked Gilbert in his book with the same title (Gilbert, 2014). We go to school to learn how to learn. In schools we can get things and skills Google can’t provide. You cannot get real friends on Google. You cannot communicate with Google the way humans do. Google does not smile at you when you achieve something. You can’t play sport with Google.

Post-millennial students are digital natives using a different accent. They are speaking “Adolish” (language

spoken by Adolescent students exclusively), while their teachers who are digital immigrants, speak “Adulish” (Adult language). Two different languages for two different generations. In post millennial age, teachers are no longer teachers; they are co-learners or “teachners”. Similarly, students are no longer students; they are co-teachers or “learchers”.

Gone are the days when teachers deliver knowledge to passive listeners. Everybody can learn something in the classroom. Students often outperform their teachers in ICTs. This is not a surprise. It is a fact. They are Technology smart. Conversely, their teachers are book smart. They are “phoneme-oriented”. Their students are “pixel-oriented”. In modern pedagogy, there is no harm to learn with students, they can teach us a lot. Having two different generations speaking two different “languages” with two different learning orientations is a plus for both teachers and learners, not a burden. However, in order to create that constructive complementarity, “teachers should learn teens language and accents in order to communicate with those post-millennials who speak DSL, digital as a second language (Jukes & Dosaj, 2006). The following table summarises the main differences between post-millennial learners and traditional teachers:

TABLE I: POST-MILLENNIALS VS. TEACHERS PREFERENCES

Post-millennials	Teachers
Prefer short forms	Prefer long forms
Prefer edutaining content	Prefer serious educating content
Prefer pictures and voices (pixel oriented)	Prefer text (phoneme oriented)
Prefer de-grammatised content (texting/SMS)	Over rely on grammar and rules (conventional texts)
Eager to use ICTs	Reluctant when asked to use ICTs.

C. Teaching Phonetics Approaches

Three approaches can be used when teaching phonetics: The analytic-linguistic approach (1), the integrative approach (2), and the intuitive imitative approach (3). The intuitive-imitative approach is said to be more effective for younger learners whereas the analytic-linguistic approach is more effective for older learners. The main approach used in Algerian schools and universities is the analytic-linguistic approach. That linguistic situation caused two major issues: fossilization and cheating in phonetics exams.

Teachers are still correcting students fossilized pronunciation mistakes even at a Master/Doctorate level and even beyond in certain situations. Moreover, students have often illegally “copied” graphics and rules and were caught several times cheating during many years. The most copied graphic was the one concerning place and manner of articulations. Phonetics was in the top five of the most “copied” modules and this is during a decade. Cheating persisted with the persistence of the exclusive use of the mono approach teaching method: the analytic linguistic approach.

Neophyte teachers in the departments of English were usually “ordered” to teach phonetics to first year students without any expertise. Teachers of applied linguistics, ESP are often “solicited” to take into charge phonetics classes. “An English teacher is apt to teach anything”, they would say. If neophytes cannot teach phonetics, they simply “learn” it

with their students and thus can make mistakes leading to the worst fossilisation ever. A neophyte teacher cannot say, “I don’t know, this is not my specialty, I am sorry, don’t rely on me...” to his students. In the table below, you can notice that the focus was on the analytic-linguistic approach rather than the rest of the innovative ones like the intuitive imitative approach.

Neophyte teachers when “asked” to teach phonetics usually ask their colleagues for assistance or worse ask formal “brilliant” students to give them their copybooks to use it as a reference or syllabus. Furthermore, teachers often complain about the absence of training in phonetics-related ICTs which include platforms and updated revolutionary teaching software. Amateurism was and still is one of the worst enemies of progress and innovativeness in education. No wonder our students do not make the difference between “her” and “hair”, and between “were” and “where” in terms of pronunciation.

TABLE II: ADAPTED FROM (ATI TESOL)

	Method	Used (or not) in classroom
1	Listen and imitate	yes
2	Phonetic training (on blackboards/teacher voice only)	yes
3	Minimal pairs drills	no
4	Visual aids (acoustics/place and manner of articulation)	yes
5	Tongue twisters	no
6	Reading aloud with focus on stress, timing and intonation	no
7	Recording of learners’ production of speeches, conversation and role play	no
8	Use of softwares like “Praat” (acoustic analysis software) to lean pronunciation with feedback	no
9	Audio visual aids (video clips/short films/other short content)	no
10	Dictation	no
11	Speaking with/listening to native speakers (Skype)	no

D. YouTube as an Edutaining Learning Platform

With 2.291 billion monthly active users, YouTube has become, in only few years, one of the most visible and viable social media in the world in 2021 after Facebook according to a statistical study (Statista, 2021). Therefore, many businessmen, artists, and educationists have jumped on that unique opportunity to see their “products” marketised thanks to the fast growing number of users. Despite the timid adoption of this entertaining social media at the beginning, teachers, coaches, and universities thought that that chance towards a worldwide visibility was too good to miss.

YouTube was initially created to entertain. “Old school” teachers could not use it at the beginning for they thought it would automatically affect their reputation as hard core formal educationists. The idea that education and entertainment are two different worlds has probably delayed the adoption of Youtube as an (in)formal learning platform. Today students and teachers can find tutorials and “how-tos” to solve their academic problems like how to write an essay, how to write a thesis, how to learn, how to teach, and the list is quasi endless.

Today, the first learning video repository is Youtube. It has empowered users to take in charge their own learning (Lee & Osop, 2015). Taking in charge one's own learning is the definition of learner autonomy introduced for the first time by Henri Holec in 1981 (Byram, 2004). Many students today think that YouTube is becoming one of the most serious competitors of teachers and thus of educational institutions. Modern pedagogy is based on major principles like the learner autonomy. Who could predict that the end of teachers' formal education could one day be an informal social media provider? Nobody.

Whether learning autonomy can be taught or learned at school is a debate in itself. There was a great debate about the issue of the learner autonomy as a means or as an end as well. Should schools invade YouTube or should YouTube invade schools? It is true learning occurs everywhere even in the cyberspace. Learning in the Covid 19 context has proved that traditional schools -with all their shortcomings- are much more interesting than facing a cold screen all day long. The complementary role of YouTube as an ally of traditional schools could be more effective than a competitive one.

With a billion views a day, YouTube can promote learning and educational content better than any other formal or informal learning platform. 80% of internet traffic comes from videos viewing. This growing interest to audio visual content has significantly changed teachers' attitudes towards informal social media role in education. According to psychologists, audio visual content is better than lectured content. It sticks in long term memory (Caplan, 2022). If a picture is worth a thousand of words, a video is probably worth more than that. School content is often pictured -no pun intended- to be boring, difficult, confusing, complex, and teacher centered. However, YouTube educational content is rather informative, fun, incredibly well presented, available, recordable, and simple. In one word, edutaining, and it sells!

E. Music Clips as Learning Tools

"Hey DJ play that song and let me learn English all day long". You have probably heard and loved a song or the album of your favorite singer that you wish you could learn at school. No? Song's lyrics are undoubtedly the fastest and funniest way to learn "real life" languages. Songs are one of the most edutaining ways to learn as well. They are precious sources to learn about vocabulary, syntax, grammar, mechanics, formal and informal language varieties, phonetics, and verbal and even nonverbal language in the case of video clips.

In a video clip, teachers and learners can find texts, sound, and pictures. The three major elements in a language are there. Songs can be seen, heard, and watched. Learners can read to write. They can listen to speak as well. So the four skills are present. If you give a textbook and popular song lyrics to a child, he/she would probably choose the lyrics for it is more appealing, short, and thus memory friendly content. Lyrics can be used at university too. Some songs titles are so popular that they can be transformed into serious books and

theses main titles. The first sentence -Hey DJ...- that you read in this section is the best illustration. This is what we call a customized marketing journal article title. See the original in Petruzzellis' article (2014). (Petruzzellis *et al.*, 2014).

Smiling and happiness are necessary emotions to learn languages according to Krashen theory of the affective filters (Baker & Jones, 1998). Boredom, stress, anger, sadness, or anxiety, play a crucial role in language learning. They can screen the information and create confusion in the learner's mind. Therefore, their absence implies the presence of interest, comfort, happiness, and satisfaction. These are the core ingredients for a successful learning experience. Negative emotions switch the learners' minds off. Positive emotions switch the learners' minds on. So, positive emotions are instrumental to learn anything, including foreign languages. Music clips, even if similar to radio or CDs content, are totally different from a linguistic point of view. Listening to sounds is good to learn pronunciation. However, sound plus pictures are by far more effective than sounds alone in terms of linguistic interpretability and predictability.

It has been proved that lyrics reinforce cognitive learning. Students learn more when integrating, lyrics (text), music (rhythm), and language (meaning) (Donovan & Pascale, 2012). Catchy tunes can create even more interest than "normal" déjà vu tunes. Students level of interest increases with the level of familiarity of the tunes they are exposed too. In this vein, the choice of the songs, the themes, and the artists can significantly contribute in the language learning process success. Popular songs were the best cultural ambassadors in the promotion of English as the most "popular" learnt language worldwide. The choice of the songs can be debatable but giving the chance for the students to propose theirs would be an interesting opportunity.

F. Music clip verbal and nonverbal messages

The presence of pictures in a movie or a music clip adds more layers to the communicational linguistic process of listening. A phone conversation will never replace face-to-face interaction. You have probably, experienced those awkward moments when you could not really understand your interlocutor via a phone conversation. The absence of the body cues lowers down the predictability of language comprehension. Their presence, on the other hand, enhances and clarifies the real intentions of the interlocutors. The "why are you shouting at me!" embarrassing moments are fun but can create amazing misunderstandings between people. A crying girl when asked can easily respond with an "I am ok!". In reality, she is not. Trembling hands, face down, with falling tears on the cheeks can never be seen in a phone conversation. One may lie, but his/her body cannot. From this perspective, still or moving pictures can tell the whole story. Verbal and nonverbal cues when combined reveal the complete picture very similar to natural, real-life communicational situations.

TABLE III: SOUND VS. PICTURE/IMAGE

Pedagogical tool	Channel	Characteristics	Users
Sound	Audio(ears)	Often misleading	1 st babies communication mode
Picture/image	Visual(eyes)	Often incomplete	2 nd babies communication mode
Sound+picture/image	Audio-visual(ears+eyes+other communication channels)	Real-life communication	Infants+adults communication mode

III. THE EXPERIMENTAL METHOD

As Walker (2006) states the selection of a research methodology is a difficult step in the research process. There are also practical considerations that can affect a researcher's decision (Ahmed *et al.*, 2016). "The experimental method involves the manipulation of variables to establish cause and effect relationships. The key features are controlled methods and the random allocation of participants into controlled and experimental groups. An experiment is an investigation in which a hypothesis is scientifically tested" (McLeod, 1970). The choice of experimental research was incited by its possible duplicability. Our hypothesis states that: post-millennials can achieve better performance if phonetics teachers use short form content in classrooms.

A. Moves

- i. Inviting the selected students (n=20) to participate in the experiment
- ii. Presenting the short form content (for G1) vs. long content (for G2)
- iii. Asking them to transcribe a text as a test.
- iv. Comparing the performances. G1(10 students vs.G2 (10 students)
- v. Analysing the results of both G1 and G2.
- vi. Asking students their opinions about the lessons and the test (Lickert scale/MCQs)
- vii. Analysing the nonverbal/verbal responses.
- viii. Results

NB: For ethical reasons students had to give their consent to be recorded with a camera.

B. Limitations

It is hard to convince a large number of persons (more than 20) to participate in experimental research. The spaceconstraint, added to the learners' reluctance, forced us to reduce the number of participants who came from different backgrounds. Social background was also a variable that might affect the result of such a study. "The parents' social class is of a great importance for the offspring's grades" as well (Helland, 2007). The different students' aspirations and the cultural differences (Arabic oriented vs. French oriented vs. English oriented cultures) added more complexity to the research. In term of duplicability it would be hard to avoid the possible -maybe slight- differences of results. Culture is language, and language is culture.

C. Group Experiment

To prepare the experiment, a sample of students who agreed to participate has been randomly selected and divided into two groups. Random selection permits to reduce selection-bias. The two groups are the experimental group (G1) and the control group (G2). The experimental group (G1) is the group that performs the actual experiment that consists in attending a phonetics lesson (transcription) using an edutaining model of teaching. On the other hand, the control group is that group that is kept separately and does not get experimented the same way as G1. Therefore, the control group (G2) had to attend a traditional content-based lesson about the same content, namely phonetic transcription.

The students were taught separately in the same room, same time -9.00a.m- but with two different approaches.

D. The Experiment with The Experimental Group (G1)

The students were asked to follow my instructions explained below.

As a first step, the edutaining (i.e.: educating + entertaining) approach used with the experimental group (G1) consists in exposing the student to a visual content with voice off. That content was a musical video clip with a song that conveys messages about a family issue namely fatherlessness. The video first moments shows a lone mother in her bedroom showing some nonverbal signs and micro-signs of distress, fatigue, and sadness. The students were introduced to nonverbal communication first with their different cues that can easily be interpreted. The students were asked to explain the meaning of some nonverbal messages sent by the singer as an expression of her emotional state that was close to depression. For instance, the students were asked to work together and participate to answer questions like: Were? When? Who? Why? What does a face looking down mean to you? What does holding the head with once hands implies to you? Could you explain the symbolic of the broken glass? What does shouting mean in nonverbal communication? Etc. Students have to watch the music clip twice and take notes of all the signs/micro signs they have observed and that could be useful to guess the words behind. "Guessing words in context" was a part of the game.

Second step, the students were asked to listen to the sound of the song with the video off. They were asked to work in small groups. They had to write the words they heard without paying attention to the spelling/grammar mistakes.

Third step, the students were given copies of the song lyrics (text) in phonetic symbols. They had to transcribe it to get a meaningful text using the NVC cues + the sounds. Example: /*haom*/ that should be re-written "*home*".

Fourth step, the students were given the "corrected" transcribed text (lyrics) on the screen. All they had to do is to correct their mistakes themselves.

As a final step, the students were allowed to watch the whole video clip with sound on as a reward for their patience the whole session. That full exposure gave the whole picture of the whole story that gathers the pictures, the sounds (verbal) and the nonverbal cues. The three dimensions of the human language were explained at the end to emphasize the role of semantics, phonetics, and semiotics and their complementarity. Context is of great importance in EFL/ESL.

E. The Students' Nonverbal Cues

1. The video with sound off was unusual for the students who have shown signs of interest and amazement. The experience was unique for the students who tried to read the video cues while being completely silent with eyes suspended to the images. Some students (pairs) were trying to communicate with each other (whispers) to confirm their guesses. Whispers were heard while having eyes on screen.
2. The "listen and write" step needed a challenging but enjoyable experience. It was like a guessing game. The level of attention was

high with pens ready to decode the sounds into meaningful words.

3. The mystery was entertained with the unusual text written completely with a phonetically transcribed style. Smiles followed the texts when put on tables. The level of concentration was high. No one could be distracted with objects like phones, watches or noises outside the classroom. Eyes were on task only.
4. The correction (transcribed text) shown on the screen redirected all the eyes towards the screen. The succession of the gamified tasks was a joyous experience for the students. Almost all of them were smiling and having fun with some of them laughing at the mistakes of each other. Trying was a constructive game.
5. A mosque-like silence accompanied their interested faces.

NB: I asked the student if they want to get a copy of the original text. To my surprise, all of them asked to get theirs. Some of them asked me for the YouTube link to the song.

F. The Experiment with The Control Group (G2)

The students of the control group or G2 were asked to follow my instructions explained below. As a reminder, G2 had to attend a traditional content-based lesson about the same content, namely phonetic transcription of a text (song's lyrics).

As a first step, the students were invited to listen and take notes -if needed- about the definitions, and the rules related to phonetic transcription (IPA). It included transcription of English consonants and vowels, stops, fricatives, affricates, nasals, approximants, lax vowels, and rhotacized vowels with descriptions, examples, and symbols. In one word, the academic traditional content-based approach. The whiteboard was the only visual tool where words and symbols were explained.

Step 2, exercises were then proposed to the students. The exercises were taken from the same lyrics introduced to G1 (the experimental group) just to compare the performances. The students were allowed to work in teams with the possibility to assist them whenever needed.

Step 3, the final test was given to the students. The words to transcribe were words in isolation taken again from the same lyrics given to G1. The words were thus decontextualised. That situation had probably added more challenges to G2.

G. The Students' Nonverbal Cues

1. There was a seemingly interest in the first minutes. The students were fresh and ready to learn a lesson they thought they could never understand. However, that interest accompanied with a relaxed "unofficial" informal lesson was from time to time interrupted with nose diving at phones. Seven times was the number of those disconnections. The task was probably predictable and thus judged as another déjà vu boring lesson.
2. The exercises were probably hard to solve for they took a long time. The faces showed perplex expressions. The absence of smiles might be a sign of concentration or/and loss (?).

3. Foreheads showed signs of tenseness. The repeated mistakes gave a feeling of helplessness. Phonetics seemed a technical task that needs precision. We could not detect the signs of enjoyment. The absence of the gamification of the task through audio visual aids had probably added to the difficulty and the unpopularity phonetic lessons have.
4. Taping pencils on the test sheet then letting them down and pencils in mouths were other signs of incapability to solve problems.
5. Some students stopped trying and just relied on their classmates- girls mainly- to give answers. Boys showed impatience with their -often smiling- faces looking away.

IV. A COMPARISON OF THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES G1 vs. G2

An online questionnaire (Lickert/MCQs) was distributed on Facebook that aimed at comparing the students' attitudes towards the learning approaches used with both G1 and G2. The questionnaire can assess the students' level of interest vs. boredom. The answers were then gathered, analyzed to be finally interpreted and discussed. The rate of responses was itself communicative of the students care vs. carelessness depending on the groups and the personal attitudes. I have chosen to reduce the number of questions to the minimum -two questions only- to guarantee a satisfactory rate of response. The following (scale/MCQs) were proposed:

1. The phonetics lesson was:

- Very interesting ☐
 Interesting ☐
 Ok ☐
 Boring ☐
 Very boring ☐

2. Are you ready to retake another phonetics lesson?

- Yes ☐
 No ☐

V. RESULTS

Long gone are the days when schooling children required seriousness, attention, rigor, and discipline. There would be no need to bring more arguments to prove the usefulness of and benefits of humor, games, and songs in the classroom. A healthy dose of humor can guarantee successful learning. In a game, being a winner or loser does not really matter. What matters is learning joyfully. In a game, winners learn that their strategy was successful and can even be sharpened. Losers, paradoxically, enjoy their sour lesson. In both cases, those competitive happy children learn at their optimal potential. This is the philosophy I try to advocate through this paper today. The gamification of pedagogical academic content is possible. However, the de-gamified pedagogical academic content has proved its sterility.

As for the experiment, it showed a higher student's performance in a gamified content as compared to the dry, outmoded, traditional de-gamified content. One can easily claim that YouTube short content is mobile friendly content because It is harder to cover a topic in-depth with short-form

content. From a nonverbal perspective, oculesics, buccalics, posture, vocalic, kinesics, including facial expressions were useful to “read” the students’ different emotions before, during, and after the experience. Those signs/micro signs can betray the level of attentiveness, enjoyment, surprise, and thus the level of involvement and interest. We also noticed that a camera recorder can be useful to analyse all the students’ body language including all the nonverbal communication channels.

The comparison of the performance of the two groups (G1 and G2) showed a higher success rate of G1 where 60% of the students got over 16/20. (See Table III below):

TABLE III: STUDENTS PERFORMANCE (G1 VS.G2)

Grades	0-5	6-9	10-15	16-20
G1	0%	10%	30%	60%
G2	30%	50%	20%	0%

One can notice that it would be much easier for a student to convert phonetic symbols into meaningful words than the reverse (the traditional approach used until now in Algerian schools). Furthermore, the experimental group asked for more lessons in English phonetics. When analysing the questionnaire, we came up with the following results as shown in Fig. 1 and Fig. 2.

The seemingly satisfying exams results obtained in the past decade may lull students, teachers, parents, and even officials into thinking they are successful. In addition, traditional approaches do not challenge the whole mind/body/senses. Simply applying rules on a sheet of paper can be counter-productive when compared to challenging the ears and mouths -listen and imitate approach for instance or the listen then write- as used in the experiment. Language learning must be contextual. Therefore, teachers should consider post-millennials as short form content consumers in their majority. On the other hand, the semiotic signs YouTube singers would send to the receivers, i.e., students, are of great importance for they can help in the contextualisation of a story (social issue).

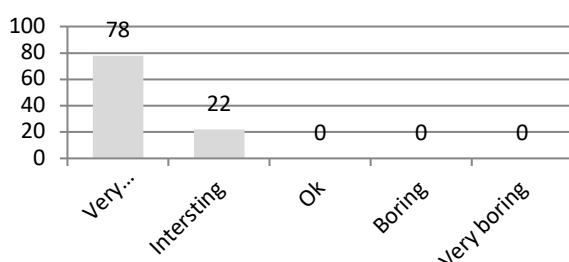


Fig. 1. The students’ attitudes towards the learning approaches (G1).

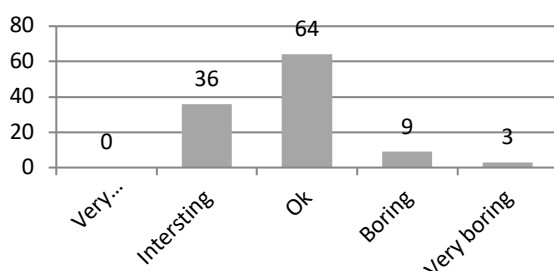


Fig. 2. The students’ attitudes towards the learning approaches (G2).

VI. CONCLUSION

Let’s face it. “Our students have changed radically. Today’s students are no longer the people our educational system was designed to teach.” (Prensky, 2001 as cited in Lytras, 2010). It is today a fact. Social media has become the most successful competitor of our boring schools. It is not enough to teach silent students who cannot criticise your approach for fear to be humiliated with a “*who do you think you are?*” absurd reaction. The literature about the use of humor in ESL/EFL has proved the sterility of the 60s approaches based on regurgitating unintelligible -often useless-long content. Edutainment theory has proved that sung words are by far much easier to recall than spoken words. It has also proved that “songs as an entertaining content seem less threatening and /or embarrassing to learn languages” (Keskin, 2011) than pure academic content that is usually labeled as “boring stuff” (Learning, 2020). Songs can be very useful in class for they are reflections of society’s culture, history, sociology, psychology, customs, humor, ethics, etc. Therefore, the benefits of music as youtubised short-form content on verbal learning and memory (Ferrerri& Verga, 2016) should be invested in schools.

Selling knowledge is very similar to selling a product. “You only have a few seconds to catch a visitor’s attention before they decide they’ve had enough and leave, or they discover they like what they see and stay for more” (LinkedIn, nd). Likewise, teachers have to remember that a well-marketized lesson will prove its efficiency in the first few minutes. Otherwise, the students will decide to shut their minds off and disconnect to connect to something more interesting: their Facebook or Instagram accounts.

The edutaining approach seems to produce quasi-magical effects. However, and for practical and managerial reasons, the majority of teachers are reluctant to use it for it requires a multidisciplinary approach that includes communication, pedagogy, sociology, psychology, and applied linguistics, preceded by academic expertise in the taught module. More than that, teaching post millennials requires communicating with them in their language, “Adolish”. So, do you speak Adolish?

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