

Abstract

We evaluated how a database of media clips housed through BlueStream, a University of Michigan digital asset management interface, can lead to effective student learning. We investigated how media clips can enhance linguistics understanding and whether the technical dimensions of the BlueStream-based database facilitate instructional use. We found that media clips can effectively boost understanding of course content and that students respond well to the use of popular culture clips in the classroom. However, findings regarding the BlueStream interface itself reveal barriers to instructional use, namely trouble finding relevant clips and the datedness of clips.



Research Questions

- Are clips an effective way to illustrate linguistic phenomena? Is it more effective to use clips simply for illustration, or do students learn more when they use the clips as a source of data to be analyzed?
- Are narrative clips as effective as documentary clips? Is there a benefit to showing both non-fictional and fictional media together?
- Are clips effective at facilitating learning when they are assigned as homework as they are when shown in class?
- Are media clips a good source for assessing student learning or evaluating student performance in class, i.e. by using them as the bases for graded quizzes, exams, or self-generated artifacts?
- How do students feel about the use of media in the linguistics classroom?
- How does the BlueStream database facilitate the effective use of media clips in the linguistics classroom? What are barriers to getting instructors to use media clips more frequently, given the benefits?

We implemented assessments in one class in F09 (LING 375: Language and the Mass Media, N=49) and three in W10 (LING 370: Language and Discrimination, N=116; LING 394: Language and Gender, N=61; LING 394: Language and Community, N=7). This poster includes results from fall semester.

In-class Assessments & Findings

Assessment 1: Clips for illustration v. Clips for data analysis. Students either passively watched clips demonstrating a phenomenon, or performed a data analysis task which used the clip as a source of data. Following the activity they were prompted for a one-minute paper: “How is language variation relevant to the mass media? Give an example.”

Results: In both conditions, students adequately answered the question by providing examples of variation and how the mass media utilize variation. However, only in the Data Analysis Condition did some students provide an example that came *from the clip* they’d watched, suggesting that students are more likely to remember the phenomena illustrated when they use clips for data analysis, rather than being shown it by the instructor.

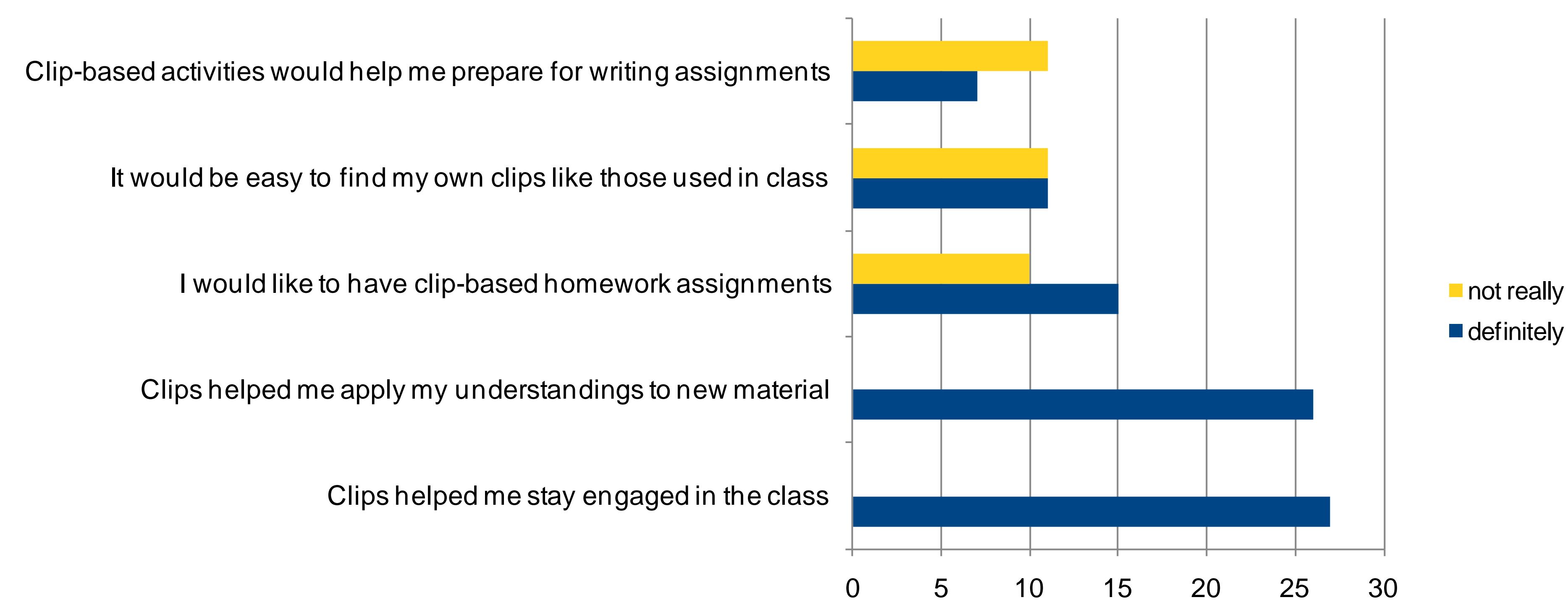
Assessment 2: Narrative clips v. Documentary clips. On two separate occasions, students were first shown a clip from a documentary series, then a movie or TV clip on the same topic. After, they were prompted for a one-minute paper, e.g.: “How well does this set of clips address the issues of linguistic power? Which clip do you find more persuasive and why?”

Results: Both narrative and documentary clips facilitate learning the relevant course concepts (such as technical properties of computer-mediated communication or the social nuances of bidialectalism), and students are capable of articulating analyses of the differences between the two types of representations. However, in both cases, students were more likely to say that the documentary media did a better job of presenting the issues, citing their “directness,” “sincerity,” and emphasis on “real-life.”

Assessment 3: Watching clips as homework v. Watching clips in class. We compared students’ scores on similar 5-question multiple choice quizzes in three conditions: No-Clip, In-Class Clips, and Homework Clips (viewed via CTools, enabled by BlueStream).

Results: Students' quiz performance was slightly lower in No-Clip than Homework, and performance was highest in In-class. This suggests that clips are beneficial in helping students grasp critical ideas, and assigning students to watch clips as homework can achieve similar results as assigning readings, but in-class presentation is likely more effective.

End-of-semester Student Poll in LING 375 (N=28)



Instructor Focus Group

We held a focus group meeting with 3 faculty members and 5 GSIs. We demonstrated the BlueStream Media Clips Database and described how we use clips for teaching. Participants provided their own feedback on the database and the use of clips. Almost all in attendance had used media at some point, but only 2 had ever used BlueStream. Suggestions for making BlueStream more usable:

- Add content that is not sociolinguistics specific, in particular content that is descriptive or documentary for illustrating “core” linguistics principles, and
- Create a centralized repository (hard drive) that instructors can transfer the media clips they've collected to, which can at some point be added to BlueStream, to continue to grow the collection.

Instructors were excited about the possibility of using clips as data sources for students’ analytical exercises; creating collections of clips to be available to students via CTools; and, using BlueStream’s capability to interface with CTools to provide students post-class online access to clips that were shown in class.



Conclusions

- Clips currently housed in the BlueStream database can be effectively used to boost student understanding, applying new concepts to data analysis, and engagement in course content.
- Streaming clips to CTools via BlueStream is useful; students would like homework to be facilitated by viewing clips. Students' viewing of clips at home seems akin to their reading of articles in terms of efficacy.
- Students want even more clips & clip-related activities.
- Instructors are excited about using media content in the linguistics classroom and agree that it can engage students. They are also excited about the BlueStream database but admit to facing a “learning curve” with the system.

*Acknowledgments:
 Louis King, Rob McIntyre, Lynne Crandall, Philomena Meechan, Lisa Del Torto, Katherine Chen, Nate LaFave, Mary Wright, Terry Szymanski