

Use of “Comment Bubbles” in a Writing-Intensive, Social and Economic Justice Course: A Novel Approach to Engage Students in Thinking About Their Writing Choices

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Abstract: *A central question among instructors teaching writing-intensive courses is how to best respond to student writing. This study posits that the margin of the essay should not be reserved for instructor feedback only, and that allowing students to comment on their writing choices in this space has pedagogical aims. This study examined the use of “comment bubbles” to engage students in thinking about their writing choices in argumentative writing in an undergraduate social and economic justice course. Comment bubbles are comments and questions students inserted in the margin of their essays using the comment function in Microsoft Word. The margin of student essays was framed as a safe writing environment to encourage student self-expression beyond that already expressed in the essay. A thematic analysis of student comment bubbles found that students used the comment bubbles to react to research they read in journal articles, elaborate on their writing choices, share their personal experiences, and reflect on their future career interests. Allowing students to comment on their writing choices in this space facilitates student self-expression, self-reflection, and critical thinking.*

Keywords: *Argumentative writing; social work; social and economic justice; writing-intensive; undergraduate students*

Social work instructors across the country are tasked with teaching writing-intensive (WI) courses informed by writing across the curriculum (WAC) pedagogy (Horton & Diaz, 2011; Kolb, 2013; Wiener, 2012). Writing-intensive courses are taught using a “writing-to-learn” and “learning-to-write” approach that incorporates writing as a mode of learning about course content and develops students’ writing skills within discipline-specific genres (Bean, 2011). For instance, WI courses in social work incorporate writing activities that teach person-in-environment perspectives and the provision of social welfare services, boundaries between social workers and clients (Horton & Diaz, 2011), and gerontology practice and theories of aging (Kolb, 2013). Writing-intensive courses, such as the one discussed in this study, offer a combination of low stakes, non-graded writing assignments and high stakes graded writing assignments (Kolb, 2013), writing consultations with instructors, revision, and peer-review (Horton & Diaz, 2011). Additionally, at the institution where the current study took place, undergraduate students must complete two WI courses, one in any discipline and one upper-level course in the major. In WI courses, at least 20 double-spaced pages of writing are completed and writing assignments comprise a major part of the course grade. The Campus Writing Program provides support services for all WI instructors and the Campus Writing Center provides tutoring for students in WI courses.

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A central question among instructors of WI courses is how best to respond to student writing (Bean, 2011). Instructors must consider how to provide appropriate guidance and motivate writers, rather than simply diagnose problems (Weaver, 2006), and reduce confusion and misunderstandings their feedback may communicate to students (Hyland & Hyland, 2001). Students value written feedback, develop perceptions of the instructor’s engagement with their writing, and respond emotionally to the feedback they receive (Lizzio & Wilson, 2008; Mahfoodh, 2017).

Purpose

In this study, students enrolled in a social and economic justice course designated as WI wrote an argumentative essay in which they were asked to pick a topic of their choice and argue how the issue is associated with discrimination and the forms of oppression covered in the course. For instance, students chose topics such as food insecurity and poverty, racism and community violence, immigration and marginalization, and sexism and the gender wage gap. Additionally, students were asked to discuss previous and current advocacy to address the issue and their thoughts on future directions to address the issue. Students were also required to write a thesis statement, use peer-reviewed journal articles to support their arguments, and include at least one counterargument. The essay was 8-11 pages in length, double-spaced, with APA-style formatting. This essay was one of two high-stakes writing assignments in the course. To facilitate the writing process, the essay was divided into three parts--a draft of the thesis statement and description of the nature of the issue, a full draft for peer-review, and the final paper due at the end of the semester. The instructor and a graduate teaching assistant provided feedback on the initial drafts. Furthermore, writing workshops were held in class to teach students how to write a thesis statement, counterarguments and rebuttals, and retrieve relevant peer-reviewed journal articles to support claims. The instructor and graduate teaching assistant also worked with students individually during in-class writing consultations before each of the sections were due to answer student questions and provide additional feedback.

This assignment was designed to integrate writing and critical thinking using approaches recommended by Bean (2011). Argumentative essays engage students in critical thinking because they require students to develop a thesis, consider different interpretations of a problem, reason, and use evidence to support arguments. Writing activities (such as the current assignment) that present students with complex problems motivate students’ curiosity and inquiry, and challenge those students to actively engage with the problem and grapple with ideas (Bean, 2011).

Instructors typically use the margin of the essay to comment on student essays and provide feedback to encourage students to think about ideas more fully (Institute for Writing and Rhetoric, 2016). This study posits that the margin of the essay should not be reserved for instructor feedback only, and that allowing students to comment on their own writing choices in this space can have pedagogical aims. Allowing students to comment on their writing choices is a student-centered approach that communicates to students that their comments are valued and not lesser than those of the instructor (Sanchez, Norka, Corbin, & Peters, 2019).

In this course, the margin of student essays was framed as a safe writing environment to encourage student self-expression beyond that already expressed in the essay. This approach was informed by prior literature indicating that students tend to restrict self-expression when they fear voicing perspectives that may be perceived as politically incorrect (Waller, Carroll, & Roemer, 1996). Additionally, student embarrassment and lack of confidence about their perceived writing skills can inhibit help-seeking to improve writing (Nelson & Weatherald, 2014). Conversations on creating safe learning environments have traditionally focused on creating such climates in the classroom. The need to create safe writing environments outside of the classroom tends to be overlooked. To address these challenges, students in the course were asked to insert at least two “comment bubbles” in their essays during the writing process. Comment bubbles are questions and comments students inserted in the margin of the essay using the comment function in Microsoft Word (see sample comment bubble in Figure 1). Students were told that the margin served as a space for them to write any questions or comments they did not want to write in the essay itself or that they felt did not fit within the conventions of the essay. Students were not provided with specific instructions on what to write.

collectively known as the Comstock laws, that prohibited the use of these objects as well (Biesel, 1997). [These policies stood until more than 90 years later in 1965, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Griswold v. Connecticut* that the government could not prohibit married couples from using birth control (Garrow, 2011). Seven years later, in the landmark case *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, the Supreme Court legalized birth control for unmarried women. [This case was decided based on a woman’s right to privacy and became the foundation for the *Roe v. Wade* case of 1973. It was in this case that the Supreme Court extended the 9th Amendment’s “right to privacy” to include a woman’s decision whether or not to terminate her pregnancy. *Roe v. Wade* made it illegal to deny a woman the right to an abortion in her first or second trimester, but the ruling did not ensure easy access to an abortion or other forms of family planning (*Roe v. Wade* 1973).

Commented [SN1]: It was crazy to me that married women were allowed birth control before unmarried women. It seems to me like unmarried women have more reason to not want to get pregnant.

Figure 1. Sample comment bubble. Sample comment bubble a student inserted in the argumentative essay.

Comment bubbles were also used as a strategy to engage students in metacognition, a deliberate awareness of one’s cognitions. Metacognition is higher-order thinking necessary for effective professional writing for social work because it allows one to stand back, examine one’s cognitions, and engage in critical thinking necessary to become effective thinkers and writers (Weisman & Zornado, 2018). Educational psychologists argue that metacognition is not something students tend to learn on their own and that instructors need to use strategies to develop students’ metacognition (National Research Council, 1999; Silver, 2013). This conscious, deliberate awareness of one’s cognitions during the writing process paves way for the development of mindfulness among writers (McDonald, Boddy, O’Callaghan, & Chester, 2015). One way in which social work instructors teaching WI courses have helped undergraduate students become conscious of their writing choices is

by asking them to use the margin of the paper to identify claims in their argumentative essays (Horton & Diaz, 2011).

The purpose of this study was to examine what students wrote in their comment bubbles to understand what they reflected on during the writing process. That is, what kinds of questions and comments did students insert in the margins of their essays? The findings can help instructors teaching WI courses better understand students' writing choices and inform the way they engage with students in the writing process to prepare students to be critical thinkers and skilled writers.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were students enrolled in a social and economic justice course in spring 2016 offered by the School of Social Work and cross-listed with Peace Studies at a Midwestern, public university in the United States. The course is taught using a social justice framework that addresses forms of oppression (e.g., violence, exploitation), discrimination (e.g., racism), intersectionality, privilege, power, and advocacy. The course is designated as WI by the Campus Writing Program and is open to students of all majors in an effort to develop a curriculum that emphasizes the significance of diversity and social and economic justice issues across the disciplines. Additionally, this is a required course for all new social work students and counts as a requirement for the university's minor in Social Justice and the Multicultural Certificate.

A Master of Social Work research assistant attended the course at the start of the spring 2016 semester and described the study to students, answered questions about participation, and informed students that their participation in this research, or a decision to withdraw from it, would not affect their grade in the course. The course instructor and teaching assistant stepped out of the classroom during the informed consent process. Of 87 students enrolled in two sections of the course, 64% ($n = 56$) provided informed consent to take part in this study allowing the research team to use their argumentative essays and comment bubbles for research purposes. Of these 56 students, 25 provided demographic information. Nearly all students were female ($n=24$), with an average age of 21 years ($SD=1.5$). Most students identified as White ($n=16$), with fewer identifying as Black ($n=2$), Chinese-American ($n=1$), and Native-American and German ($n=1$). Five students identified as being first-generation college students, and 12 students reported taking the course to fulfill the University's writing intensive requirement. Table 1 lists students' year in school and major. The principal investigator de-identified student essays by removing student names and replacing them with identification numbers. Student essays were stored in a secure, web-based storage site managed and approved by the University. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the researchers' institution.

Table 1. *Participants' year in school and major (n = 56)*

Student Characteristics	n	%
Year in School		
Freshman	6	10.7%
Sophomore	24	42.9%
Junior	13	23.2%
Senior	13	23.2%
Major		
Social Work	21	37.5%
Psychology	10	17.9%
Undeclared	6	10.7%
Pre-Health Professions	5	8.9%
Nutritional Sciences	2	3.6%
Pre-Nutritional Sciences	2	3.6%
Business Administration	1	1.8%
Communication	1	1.8%
General Studies	1	1.8%
Health Science	1	1.8%
Interdisciplinary Studies	1	1.8%
Mathematics	1	1.8%
Philosophy	1	1.8%
Political Science	1	1.8%
Pre-Communication	1	1.8%
Pre-Personal Financial Planning	1	1.8%

Research Team

The research team consisted of the course instructor, a Master of Social Work (MSW) student, and a senior Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) student. The BSW student was enrolled in the course the previous year as a junior; however, the particular instructor for their section of the course did not use comment bubbles as part of the class. The researchers practiced reflexivity through reflection, memoing, and peer-debriefings. Reflexivity refers to the process by which researchers recognize they play a role in the creation of knowledge and continuously evaluate how their intersecting identities, assumptions, beliefs, biases, and experiences affect the research process and outcomes (Berger, 2015; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, the researchers employed investigator triangulation, which refers to the use of multiple observers of the same data to reduce bias from a single person and ensure greater reliability in observations (Denzin, 1978). During peer debriefings, the researchers compared coding, asked each other questions to understand and challenge each other's interpretations of the data, integrate categories, and refine the codebook. Researcher reflexivity and peer debriefings are methodological strengths that increase a study's validity (Creswell & Miller, 2000).

Thematic Analysis

The first step in data analysis was a thorough review of the assignment guidelines by the research team. Then, each team member read the anonymized student essays and the comment bubbles to familiarize themselves with the data. Student essays and comment bubbles were examined as student artifacts, as texts constructed by students and situated in a place and time (Castelló & Iñesta, 2012). Student essays were also considered classroom artifacts because writing assignments reflect the goals and values of a course and its discipline (Melzer, 2009). The units of analysis were the comment bubbles. The text associated with the comment bubbles provided context for understanding the comment bubbles.

The researchers conducted a thematic analysis of 90 comment bubbles. Theoretical thematic analysis was used to identify themes. Theoretical thematic analysis refers to identifying themes that answer a specific research question, as opposed to inductive analysis which is more data-driven, and has some similarity to grounded theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding began with provisional coding, which refers to an initial list of codes that can be revised, deleted, or expanded to include new codes as data are collected, coded, and analyzed (Saldaña, 2016). The course instructor, also the principal investigator, requested a copy of the coding scheme developed by LaVaque-Manty and Evans (2013). This coding scheme was based on a thematic analysis of the comment bubbles that undergraduate students in Evans' WI psychology class inserted in their papers. This coding scheme was selected because it was the only available framework for analyzing comment bubbles inserted in papers written by undergraduate students in a social science course. The initial coding scheme contained categories and quotes from student comment bubbles representative of the categories. A sample quote was, “I tried to add to the introduction and to follow the guidelines. I am not sure that I mastered the concept fully and was still a little lost as to how to begin the introduction and what to include in the introduction.” This quote was associated with the category “Reflections on own writing.” In the current study, the research team used this initial coding scheme to do a first cycle of coding of students' comment bubbles in the argumentative essay.

In the second and consecutive cycles of coding, the research team identified new categories they observed in the data and deleted categories from the initial coding scheme that they did not observe in these data. For instance, a category that the researchers observed in the data that was not in the initial coding scheme was “Personal experiences associated with content.” In consecutive cycles of coding, the research team continued organizing the data, defining and naming categories, refining the codebook, and identifying repeated patterns that emerged from the data that could be potential themes.

Findings

The following four themes emerged from the data: (1) reactions to research, (2) elaboration on one's writing choices, (3) personal experiences, and (4) future career interests. These themes are illustrated below with representative quotes. The corresponding writer's major and year in school appear in parentheses.

Reactions to Research

The majority of comment bubbles were student reactions to research. These comments were characterized as student reactions to information in peer-reviewed journal articles that students cited in their essays as evidence to support their arguments. Students shared primarily positive and emotional reactions to the information they read.

Students shared their enthusiasm for articles that discussed advocacy efforts to address the needs of vulnerable populations. For instance, one student cited an article on how a public library started a campaign to promote awareness of human trafficking after learning that the library was becoming a safe haven for victims of human trafficking: “It was amazing to read this article. To know that one girl/victim was saved and then an amazing program started because of it” (Social Work, Junior).

Similarly, another student who wrote an essay on ableism commented on the wage and employment effects of the Americans with Disabilities Act:

This paper was really interesting for me and I really enjoyed researching this topic. It is a huge passion for me and one thing I enjoy about this field is being able to find ways to make changes and better help the community in understanding different populations. This paper helped me understand how important research is and how research helps you see what things have been done or not done to make a change and the effectiveness of change. (Social Work, Senior)

Students also expressed enthusiasm at finding articles to support their claims. For instance, a student who cited an article about racial disparities in the criminal justice system wrote:

I'm so glad that I found this article. Not only does it show that Black ex-felons are more disadvantaged than White ex-felons but that Black individuals who don't even have a criminal record will find it harder to find a job than a White person with a criminal record. (Social Work, Sophomore)

In some instances, students reacted to the language used in journal articles and the messages these conveyed:

One of the articles I read only referred to the survivors of assault and rape as victims. Although the article was advocating for them it seemed odd to use such a negative word. Instead of promoting their strength, it just made me think of how important our word choice is. (Nutritional Sciences, Sophomore)

This comment suggests the student recognized the values and assumptions behind the use of the term “victims” versus “survivors.” This may be due to the course emphasizing use of person-first language and language that is sensitive to diverse groups of people and the conditions they live in.

Students also reacted to the statistics they read in journal articles. One student commented on the percentage of school children from low-income families attending public schools: “I think this statistic is very shocking and eye-opening. I had no clue that so many families were low-income” (Undeclared, Sophomore).

Elaboration on One’s Writing Choices

Some students inserted comment bubbles that elaborated on or clarified their word choices, writing strategies, and expressions of writing difficulty. For example, one student commented on the use of the wording “a person with a disability” versus “disabled”: “After this class, I am aware now to use this terminology instead of ‘a disabled person,’ because this puts the disability as the defining quality of someone. I did not know this before” (Pre-Personal Financial Planning, Junior).

Students commented on the writing strategies they could have used to communicate their ideas better: “I think I could have gone into more detail about childcare and how a large portion of a low-income family’s money goes towards childcare while these parents are working long hours or night shifts” (Psychology, Sophomore).

Expressions of difficulty were comments in which students shared their uncertainty or difficulty conveying meaning and questioned their control of the ideas they wanted to express. For instance, here a student expresses uncertainty about whether the use of “tightly bonded” conveys a family structure that challenges the traditional family structure: “I do not know if “tightly bonded” is a way to word that. I wanted to express that their families were not ‘normal.’ Normal being defined as having a mother and father in the home together” (Psychology, Junior).

Students also expressed difficulty paraphrasing and quoting such as, “I know this is a really long quote but I didn’t see any other way to paraphrase it. I just thought it was written too well!” (Social Work, Senior). The student had this concern because students were asked to paraphrase as much as possible and quote minimally only when quoting an important document such as policy or an influential orator.

Students also asked questions to elicit help from the reader such as: “It was very hard for me to find a statistic of the rate of African Americans that lose their jobs because of an illness. Do you have any recommendations on where to look for this information in the future?” (Social Work, Senior). The use of questions suggests that students want to engage the reader and are looking for feedback that will help them find resources to support their arguments.

Personal Experiences

To a lesser extent, students used the comment bubbles to share their personal experiences with the reader. Personal experiences were characterized by the use of “I” and “me” and the sharing of one’s lived experiences. For instance, one student wrote about racial disparities between school districts and shared this observation: “I have worked with a high poverty school and you can really see the differences in race within the school” (Political Science, Sophomore).

Another student who wrote an essay on educational disparities shared a personal experience about the challenges of pursuing a college degree. This comment bubble was associated with a part of the essay that discussed lack of family support among first-generation college students, compared to second-generation college students:

This statistic was very impactful to me because as a first-generation college student I know that this is true in most cases. My parents do not understand why I wanted to go to college and are not very supportive of my decision. I had no idea that statistically this can create a big impact on if I obtain a degree or not. (Social Work, Junior)

The student shared his identity and experience as a first-generation college student and his relationship with family. He also reacted strongly to the information in the journal article because he personally related to the information.

A student who wrote an essay on women and sexism cited an article that discussed how women organize their lives and behavior to minimize their risk of sexual assault and what she did personally to reduce her risk of sexual assault:

It is very unfair that women have to live their lives in constant fear that they could be sexually assaulted. I know that I plan out things so that I don't put myself in risky situations, such as never walking alone at night or always watching my drink at a party. (Social Work, Freshman)

The comment suggests that the student is aware that women are at risk of sexual assault because of their sex and gender. The comment also reflects the narrative of personal responsibility and victim-blaming, that is, the perception that women are responsible for or are the ones to blame for sexual assault because of their behavior such as walking alone at night or drinking.

Future Career Interests

In a few cases, students used the comment bubbles to relate content in their essays to their future career in social work and populations of interest. For instance, a student who wrote about ethnic/racial disparities in standardized test scores, academic achievement, and the quality of education inserted the following: "I loved writing this paper. I became emotional during it because it truly is unfair for individuals suffering from classism and/or racism. I hope as a future social worker to help change some of this." (Psychology, Senior). The student reflected on how she felt during the writing process. The student's use of "unfair" and "suffering" suggest the student empathized with people who experience classism and racism, motivating the student to address educational inequalities as a future social worker.

Another student used the comment bubbles to reflect on visible and invisible disabilities and express motivation to work with veterans with mental health needs:

This is something that is very important to me, and one of the main reasons that I want to work with veterans when I graduate. I feel like because you cannot see a mental illness like you can a physical disability, these men and women do not get the help they need. (Social Work, Freshman)

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to understand what students wrote in comment bubbles they inserted in an argumentative essay in a writing-intensive, social and economic justice course. Comment bubbles were a pedagogical approach used to engage students in reflection on their writing choices during the writing process. Students used the comment bubbles to react to research, elaborate on their writing choices, and reflect on their personal experiences and future career interests.

Existing literature indicates that college students tend to be resistant to reading journal articles when they are disinterested in the material and lack self-confidence in their reading comprehension skills (Lei, Bartlett, Gorney, & Herschbach, 2010). In contrast, this study's findings suggest that undergraduate students express enthusiasm when reading research on advocacy efforts to meet the needs of vulnerable populations and research that supports their claims. This may be because students searched for journal articles on a topic of their choice and comprehended the journal articles enough to use them as evidence in their essays. The positive reaction to journal articles is consistent with research suggesting that students develop confidence when they learn to gather relevant information and communicate their findings effectively (Freeman & Lynd-Balta, 2010).

Students used the comment bubbles to elaborate on their word choices and writing strategies. This suggests that students were aware of their audience and were concerned about their ability to communicate effectively. Audience awareness refers to actively keeping one's audience in mind and allowing this awareness to influence one's writing process such as planning ideas and formulating sentences (Wong, 2005). Students also shared expressions of writing difficulty in their comment bubbles to elicit feedback from readers, who were the course instructor and graduate teaching assistant. This is consistent with research that college students tend to value teacher feedback on writing assignments when they perceive teachers to have a greater command of language and word choice than they do (Zacharias, 2007).

This study also found that students used the comment bubbles to share their personal experiences with the reader. The findings are consistent with research that social work students and first-year undergraduate students tend to rely on their personal experiences to write papers (Aull, 2015; Jani & Mellinger, 2015). However, this study's findings counter results that students fail to link their personal experiences to larger conceptual issues (Jani & Mellinger, 2015). In this study, students connected their personal experiences to content they read in journal articles such as educational disparities and risk of sexual assault. The findings are consistent with research that students tend to assimilate new concepts by connecting course concepts to personal experiences and information they already know (Bean, 2011).

Finally, to a lesser extent, students used the comment bubbles to reflect on their future career interests. Research on undergraduate student writing has found that expressive, creative, and reflective writing used in career-writing courses facilitate development of career identity (Lengelle, Meijers, Poell, & Post, 2013; 2014). Similarly, this study's findings suggest that argumentative writing, with the use of comment bubbles, can facilitate reflection on one's career. Although students were not asked to write about their

future career in this essay, students may have used the comment bubbles to do so because they wrote the argumentative essay on a topic of their choice. Indeed, when students are given autonomy to choose their own topics, they tend to be more invested in an assignment because they can pursue their own passions and interests (Bean, 2011).

Limitations

This study had limitations. First, this study is drawn from two sections of one course conducted at one university with one instructor in one semester, and therefore, there are limitations to generalizing the findings to students at other campuses. Second, student interactions with the instructor and graduate teaching assistant likely influenced students' comfort level to comment, share their personal experiences, and ask questions in the comment bubbles, and this study did not account for these influences. Additionally, this study did not assess student confidence or self-efficacy with regard to academic writing.

Future Research

Future research will need to examine the extent to which students feel the margin of the paper served as a safe writing environment in which they could express themselves honestly using comment bubbles. Student comfort level can vary depending on the type of and level of engagement with instructors and graduate teaching assistants, and this can influence what students write in their comment bubbles. Additionally, future research will also need to examine how instructors and teaching assistants respond to student comment bubbles, student perceptions of this feedback, and the extent to which students benefit from the feedback, depending on the goals of the assignment. Future research can also consider the impact of using comment bubbles on the nature and effectiveness of peer-review and assess the impact of comment bubbles on students' critical thinking.

Implications for Social Work Education

The use of comment bubbles as a pedagogical approach that allows students to reflect on their writing has implications for social work education. Research has found that when students take part in experiential learning activities and then reflect on these experiences in their writing, they use comment bubbles to examine their emotions, seek understanding of self and others, and recognize their privilege (Sanchez et al., 2019). And as the current study finds, when engaged in argumentative writing, students use comment bubbles to react to research they read in journal articles, elaborate on their writing choices, share their personal experiences, and reflect on their future career. Clearly, use of comment bubbles can have different pedagogical aims depending on the purpose of the writing assignment, and instructors need to consider how best to use comment bubbles to meet student learning goals.

Thesis-based argumentative writing assignments such as the one discussed in this study, engage students in complex thinking about debatable issues that can be approached from multiple perspectives (Bean, 2011). Social work instructors and instructors teaching writing-intensive courses can supplement argumentative writing with comment bubbles to further prepare students to be critical thinkers and skilled writers. For instance, student

reflections on research can help instructors assess whether students are retrieving relevant information and communicating their findings effectively, particularly in a class such as this one with students ranging from freshmen to seniors with varying degrees of literacy working with peer-reviewed journal articles. Student reflections on their writing strategies and expressions of difficulty can help instructors identify areas where students need assistance, be it help writing coherent arguments or paraphrasing quotations, and aid instructors in providing revision-oriented feedback tailored to student comments. This can help students develop their writing skills, particularly students concerned with their writing abilities who may be hesitant to meet with the instructor in person. Comment bubbles can help engage students in the writing process however this should not take the place of student-teacher consultations. Instructors might also consider inserting their own comment bubbles to engage students with opposing points of view and help them develop more nuanced arguments. Instructors can also use comment bubbles as a peer-review tool to help students elicit feedback from their peers. Allowing students to comment on their writing choices in this space has pedagogical aims and facilitates student self-expression, self-reflection, and critical thinking.

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