

# Enhancing Students' Writing Skills through Writing Techniques and Mastery of Different Discourse Markers

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## ABSTRACT

Effective writing instruction requires innovative techniques to improve coherence and fluency, particularly among second-language learners. Reflective Learning Portfolio (RLP) emphasizes reflective practice in learning, while Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW) fosters community, enhances interactions, and builds self-awareness. Despite their individual merits, the integrated effect of these reflective techniques alongside discourse markers on students' writing proficiency remains understudied. This research employed a quantitative, quasi-experimental methodology with a non-equivalent control group using a two-way factorial design. From a total cohort of 1000 students at a State Islamic Senior High School in Serang Regency, Indonesia, a random sample of 200 participants was selected. Students were grouped based on treatment (RLP and DJW) and proficiency levels in discourse marker usage (high, medium, low). Findings revealed three key outcomes: (1) significant differences in writing skills between students instructed with RLP and those using DJW; (2) notable variations in writing proficiency correlated with students' ability to use discourse markers, categorized as high, medium, and low proficiency; and (3) a significant interaction effect between writing techniques and discourse marker proficiency, suggesting the combined influence substantially impacts writing skills. This study uniquely integrates reflective writing techniques and discourse marker training, highlighting their combined role in enhancing structural coherence and promoting metacognitive growth in student writing. It demonstrates the value of explicitly teaching discourse markers within reflective instructional contexts, providing valuable insights into effective pedagogical strategies for second language writing instruction.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mastering the skill of writing is a challenging endeavour and is commonly considered the most complex and arduous component of language acquisition (Harmer, 2007; Hyland, 2022). Creating requires various tools, including sophisticated grammatical structures, stylistic expertise, mechanical skill, careful vocabulary selection, and evaluative judgment capabilities (Hedge, 2005). Written communication is a complex and challenging skill that involves both the process and the result. Composing transforms concepts into symbolic artefacts (Sofiya et al., 2018; Widosari et al., 2017; Winarni et al., 2021). Writing is a complex activity influenced by multiple factors, including psychology, language, and cognition. Proficiency in writing includes technical skills in grammar and style, as well as an understanding of how cognitive processes and psychological factors influence a writer's ability to effectively organize and express ideas (Graham et al., 2012).

Owing to the challenges associated with developing writing proficiency, teachers employed several strategies. This study examined two writing techniques: Reflective learning portfolio and dialogue journal writing. Both techniques aim to cultivate reflective practice via social interaction. It is an instructional technique employed to teach writing, comprising a compilation of students' works that demonstrates their endeavours, advancements, and accomplishments in writing class (Corley & Zubizarreta, 2012). Dialogue journal writing is an instructional technique that involves a written dialogue between the teacher and the students (Gebhard, 2006). Consequently, discourse markers facilitate unlimited involvement and coherence in communication. The utilization of discourse markers enhances the coherence of discourse, which is a key and significant element of writing (AbuSa'aleek, 2022a; Karaata et al., 2012; Zhao, 2013). Discourse markers effectively show the relationships between various linguistic elements, which aids in the formation of a coherent discourse. However, many learners struggle to use discourse markers appropriately, leading to fragmented writing. Thus, explicit instruction in discourse markers is essential for improving writing coherence.

The reflective learning portfolio constitutes an element of reflective learning that emphasizes the context and the learning process (O'Donoghue, 2010). This writing technique promotes a problem-solving environment that challenges students' knowledge and prompts them to reflect on the accuracy and depth of their understanding in relation to the course topic. The portfolio must encompass the students' involvement in content selection, the criteria utilized for selection, and documentation of student self-reflection. It engages learners in ongoing reflection and collaboration, emphasizing selective evidence of learning (Hemmati & Soltanpour, 2012), prompting students to assess themselves and track their development over time. Furthermore, the portfolio may take various forms, including written content, electronic presentation, or other creative endeavours (Zubizarreta, 2009).

The second technique for instructing writing is dialogue journal writing. It is a documented dialogue between two parties, the educator and the learners (Gebhard, 2006). This technique prompts students to compose on topics of their selection, while the instructor provides personalized feedback. Dialogue journal writing constitutes a written exchange between educators and learners that emphasizes meaning over form. It enhances students' linguistic proficiency, course material, and written English communication. Moreover, it is a technique designed to enhance students' writing skills through significant involvement. It has been utilized in educational environments to cultivate students' writing skills, improve reading comprehension, and aid in the retention of material knowledge. Furthermore, dialogue journal writing is utilized to foster classroom communities, enhance teacher-student connection, and develop students' self-awareness and confidence (Yulianawati et al., 2022). Meanwhile, discourse markers are words or phrases, such as "however," "therefore," or "on the other hand," that facilitate communication, link concepts, and improve coherence in writing and speech. Collectively, these principles enable students to analyse critically, articulate effectively, and participate meaningfully in their writing endeavours.

Previous studies have shown that reflective learning portfolios aid students in acclimating to classroom settings, promote reflective cognition, and improve their writing skills (Farahian & Avarzamani, 2018; Khodadady & Khodabakhshzade, 2012; Reyes-Chua et al., 2020; Sulistyoyo et al., 2020;

Yulianawati et al., 2022). Current studies on dialogue Journal Writing demonstrate its efficacy in improving students' writing skills and increasing their motivation to compose English (Foroutan & Noordin, 2012; Liao & Wong, 2010; Rokni & Seifi, 2013). Previous studies on discourse markers have examined their significance in improving essay writing quality and facilitating text comprehension (Al-khazraji, 2019; Alsaawi, 2022; Fox Tree, 2015; Kalajahi & Abdullah, 2015; Manan & Raslee, 2018; Mughrabi, 2017; Riznanda, 2021; Vahdat et al., 2016).

Despite extensive research on writing techniques and discourse markers separately, few studies explore their combined effect on students' writing. Prior research rarely examines how integrating Reflective Learning Portfolio and Dialogue Journal Writing with discourse marker instruction enhances coherence. The study tackles the recognized gap in the literature by highlighting the insufficiently examined confluence of writing skills and mastery of discourse markers. Although prior research has frequently concentrated on these elements in isolation, limited studies have investigated the impact of combining writing techniques, such as reflective writing or dialogue journaling, with the intentional instruction of discourse markers on enhancing learners' communicative competence and writing coherence. The integration is vital as discourse markers function as linguistic instruments that structure thoughts, elucidate relationships between concepts, and improve logical coherence, which is important for proficient writing. Without proficiency in discourse markers, even coherently structured thoughts may seem fragmented or ambiguous. Writing strategies offer a pragmatic framework for learners to implement and enhance their utilization of discourse markers in genuine, significant circumstances.

The study integrates various techniques, connecting theoretical insights with practical tactics, so aiding learners in internalizing both the structure and purpose of language. This integration enhances the discipline by fulfilling a pragmatic educational requirement: enabling learners to compose cohesively while engaging in critical reflection. It also emphasizes the dynamic interplay between writing practices and linguistic characteristics, offering educators a more comprehensive approach to instruction. This synergy addresses a deficiency in current literature and facilitates avenues for additional research into multidisciplinary approaches for enhancing writing skills. This study seeks to identify the disparities in students' writing competencies utilizing reflective learning portfolios and dialogue journal writing, considering varying levels of discourse marker proficiency. Therefore, this study aims to examine how the integration of Reflective Learning Portfolio and Dialogue Journal Writing with explicit discourse marker instruction influences students' writing coherence and overall writing competence. Additionally, it seeks to identify the disparities in students' writing competencies utilizing these two techniques, considering varying levels of discourse marker proficiency.

## 2. METHODS

The present research employed a quantitative methodology, more precisely utilizing a quasi-experimental design. This design integrates the technique of non-equivalent control groups with a two-way factorial design (ANOVA 2 x 3) methodology. The factorial approach employed in this study enables the investigation of the influence of two distinct treatment variables, considered as factors, on the target population (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The non-equivalent control group design is selecting a group of individuals from a certain group, administering a pretest, and subsequently providing treatment. Following therapy, the subjects undergo a post-test to assess the treatment's impact on the group (Creswell, 2014). This research has a sample size of 200 students. A total of 100 individuals comprised each group. Every single student was a native Indonesian speaker. Both the first and second experimental groups received treatment with the reflective learning portfolio and the dialogue journal writing techniques, respectively. The present research further examines the variability in students' proficiency in discourse markers. This research included a population of 1000 students from Madrasah Aliyah Negeri in Serang Regency, Indonesia. The sample design employed random sampling.

Data collection instruments comprise writing assessments and discourse markers. All instruments underwent testing in the preceding semester, and the attributes of the tested students closely resemble

those of actual grade XI English students. Validity and reliability are assessed using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The instrument validity test results are valid as the estimated  $r$  value meets or exceeds the  $r$  table value for  $n = 200$  and  $\alpha = 0.05$ . The results of the dependable instrument reliability test, 0.985, exceed the  $r$  table value of 0.138. These results indicate a high level of consistency and accuracy in measuring students' writing skills and discourse marker usage. Although expert judgment from senior EFL lecturers and experienced writing instructors was not formally conducted, the validity of the instrument was strengthened through an extensive review of existing standardized writing assessment frameworks. The instrument was developed based on well-established evaluation criteria widely recognized in academic writing research, ensuring its relevance and appropriateness for the target student population. Furthermore, the use of Cohen's (1994) rubric, which provides a structured and widely accepted framework for writing assessment, further enhances the reliability and objectivity of the scoring process. The assessment was administered to students in both the experimental and control groups prior to the intervention (pre-test) and subsequent to the intervention (post-test). Two impartial English teachers were designated as evaluators of the students' writing. This evaluation measure is derived from Cohen (1994) and comprises content, organization, language, grammar, and mechanics.

**Table 1.** Writing Test Assessment Rubric (Cohen, 1994)

Score	Criteria	Description
5 (Very Good)	Organization, Content & Development, Grammar and Style, Vocabulary	The writing is very well structured with coherent paragraphs and clear transitions. The ideas are very clear, well-developed, and have strong arguments. The use of grammar is excellent with effective sentence variety. The vocabulary is rich, precise and varied. Spelling and Punctuation,
4 (Good)	Organization, Content & Development, Grammar and Style, Vocabulary	The writing is clear with fairly good transitions. Well developed, although there are some parts that are less strong. Some minor errors in grammar, but do not interfere with understanding. quite varied and appropriate to the context. A few errors, but do not interfere with understanding.
3 (Fair)	Organization, Content & Development, Grammar and Style, Vocabulary	The writing is quite clear, but transitions between parts are not smooth. Content & Idea Development is understandable, but is poorly developed or lacks supporting evidence. Grammar errors occur quite frequently, but are still understandable. Vocabulary is limited and sometimes out of context. Several errors that can interfere with understanding.
2 (Poor)	Organization, Content & Development, Grammar and Style, Vocabulary	The writing is not clear, paragraphs are not coherent. Content & Development Ideas are not well developed, lack of clear evidence or arguments. Many grammatical errors that interfere with understanding. Vocabulary is very limited and often out of context. Many errors that interfere with understanding.

1 (Very Poor)	Organization, Content & Development, Grammar and Style, Vocabulary	There is no clear structure in the writing. Content & Development Ideas are unclear or not developed at all. Many grammatical errors and difficult to understand. Vocabulary Very limited and often out of context. Many errors that are difficult to understand.
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Data collection was carried out in two phases. In the first phase, the researcher prepared writing instruction based on specific writing techniques and designed lesson plans following the school's English syllabus. Research instruments were also developed during this stage. The second phase involved applying the writing approaches and discourse markers, including conducting pre-tests and post-tests. In the first week, students completed a writing proficiency test, followed by an assessment of their discourse marker skills.

From the second to the fourteenth week, students in both treatment groups—Reflective Learning Portfolio and Dialogue Journal Writing—attended weekly 100-minute sessions. These weekly meetings served several practical and educational purposes: (1) maintaining structured and focused instruction without overwhelming students, (2) providing sufficient time for deep reflection and improvement of writing skills, (3) avoiding cognitive overload by pacing activities steadily, and (4) establishing a realistic and manageable timeframe (weeks 2–14) for effectively comparing the two approaches. This consistent schedule balanced in-depth instruction and reflection time, promoting continuous and meaningful learning.

The initial experimental group received instruction through a reflective learning portfolio, while the subsequent control group was instructed using dialogue journal writing. Implementing the RLP approach in Class A involves six steps. The initial step involves composing a draft, followed by self-revision, and then the creation of a second draft, subsequent to which feedback is solicited from educators and peers. The fifth step entails producing a final draft, and the sixth step consists of reflecting on the accomplishments realized in the final writing draft. Between the second and fourteenth meetings, the RLP program incorporates a 20-minute intermission at the conclusion of each session for participants to compose a reflection diary regarding the lesson. The reflection notebook encompasses a course description, insights gained, and an assessment of personal development resulting from the experience. Participants are required to preserve all their work, including in-class worksheets, notes reflecting on teacher feedback, essay drafts, assignments, and learning portfolio documents.

Simultaneously, the DJW technique is implemented in Class B through four stages. The initial phase involves planning, followed by drafting, then editing, and concluding with the compilation of the final edition of the student participant's essay. Every session in the DJW class includes a break of approximately 20 minutes at the conclusion of the lesson. Participants in this class are required to communicate with their teachers through conversation journals. The participants were instructed to disregard grammar and spelling concerns and to articulate their thoughts and emotions without restraint. Upon the conclusion of the lesson, the instructor reviewed the participants' writings and provided feedback in their journals. Ultimately, after all groups received instruction through the reflective learning portfolio and dialogue journal writing techniques, a text composition assessment and discourse marker evaluation were administered as a post-test to ascertain the participants' writing proficiency and command of discourse markers.

The data analysis method commenced with the presentation of descriptive-analytical statistics, guided by the problem and hypotheses described in this study. The investigation examined several components related to students' writing abilities, including mean scores, measures of variability (standard deviation), lowest and highest scores observed, and marginal mean estimates. The estimated marginal mean in ANOVA is the adjusted mean for the groups in the study, calculated while taking into account the influence of other factors in the model. This measure, sometimes referred to as the estimated marginal mean (EMM) or least squares mean, shows the average results for each group,

assuming all groups are balanced for other factors or covariates in the analysis. This study's analysis was performed to evaluate the hypothesis utilizing inferential statistics. The present data analysis assesses the influence of writing techniques and the adeptness in employing discourse markers on students' writing skills.

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Findings

This study examines the disparities in enhancing students' writing abilities by employing writing techniques and achieving proficiency in high, medium, and low discourse markers. These research results are categorized into three research findings: (1) disparities in writing skills between students who received treatment with the writing techniques, (2) disparities in writing skills among students with high, medium, and low proficiency in student discourse markers, and (3) the impact of the interaction between writing techniques and high, medium, and low proficiency in student discourse markers on students' writing skills, as observed from the average pre-test and post-test. The pre-test and post-test evaluations were carried out to assess the writing abilities of pupils both before and after the intervention. The findings indicated notable disparities in writing proficiency between the two cohorts of students. Substantial differences in discourse markers were noted between the two groups. Specifically, there were notable disparities among students who had high, medium, and poor competency in discourse markers. This is evident from the disparities in mean scores reported by the various groups. Hence, Tables 2 and 3 provide a depiction of the writing abilities of students before and after the use of the writing technique to integrate English discourse markers among various groups.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics of the Experimental Group Writing Skill

Statistic	Discourse Markers	Pre-test	N	Post-test	N
Means	High	75.83	50	82.93	50
	Medium	58.42	40	72.84	40
	Low	46.52	10	52.68	10
Std. Deviation	High	3.044	50	3.900	50
	Medium	7.306	40	2.505	40
	Low	7.482	10	9.075	10

The results of the pre-test in the experimental group indicated that students who had a high degree of competence in discourse markers achieved an average writing skill score of 75.83, accompanied by a standard deviation of 3.044. Among the students classified as having a moderate degree of competence in discourse markers, the mean score for writing skills was 58.42, with a standard deviation of 7.306. By comparison, students classified as having limited competence in discourse markers attained an average score of 46.52 in writing abilities, accompanied by a standard deviation of 7.482. The post-test results of the experimental group indicated that students who showed a high degree of competence in discourse markers achieved an average score of 82.93 in writing skills, accompanied by a standard deviation of 3900. Students who demonstrated a moderate degree of competence in discourse markers achieved an average score of 72.84 in writing skills, with a standard deviation of 2.505. Conversely, students with a poor level of proficiency achieved a score of 52.68 in writing skills, with a standard deviation of 9.075. The results of this investigation elucidate this phenomenon.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics of the Control Group Writing Skill

Statistic	Discourse Markers	Pre-test	N	Post-test	N
Means	High	58.00	40	65.32	40
	Medium	50.30	30	58.17	30
	Low	40.50	30	50.00	30
Std. Deviation	High	7.497	40	4.075	40
	Medium	6.174	30	7.389	30
	Low	7.200	30	6.975	30

The pre-test results of the control group, as presented in Table 3, are as follows: In the group exhibiting high proficiency in discourse markers, the mean writing skill score is 58.00, with a standard deviation of 6.770. The group demonstrating moderate proficiency in discourse markers has an average score of 50.30, with a standard deviation of 6.174. The group with low proficiency in discourse markers has an average score of 40.50, with a standard deviation of 7.200. The post-test results indicate that the group with high discourse marker mastery had an average writing skill score of 65.32, with a standard deviation of 4.075. The group of students with moderate discourse marker mastery attained an average writing skill score of 58.17, with a standard deviation of 7.389. The group of students with low discourse marker mastery had an average writing skill score of 50.00, with a standard deviation of 6.975. An analysis of the data was performed to establish the hypothesis and evaluate the relationship between the independent factors and the dependent variables. The study results suggest that proficiency in writing techniques and mastery of discourse markers significantly influence students' writing skills.

**Table 4.** Test of ANOVA 2 ways

Dependent Variable: Writing Skill					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	38840.634 <sup>a</sup>	4	9710.158	343.684	.000
Intercept	422124.632	1	422124.632	14940.793	.000
Writing Techniques	7351.549	2	3675.775	130.101	.000
Discourse Markers	238.386	1	238.386	8.438	.004
Writing Techniques * Discourse Markers	278.546	1	278.546	9.859	.002
Error	5509.366	195	28.253		
Total	800800.000	200			
Corrected Total	44350.000	199			

a. R Squared = .876 (Adjusted R Squared = .873)

The results of the hypothesis test analysis in Table 4 show that there is a statistically significant difference in the English writing skills of students who use writing techniques. These results are obtained by comparing the computed F value with the expected F value from the F table at a significance threshold of 5% in the two-way parametric test. The computed F value ( $F = 130.101$ ) surpasses the critical F value from the standard F table (3.89), suggesting statistical significance. The obtained significance value (0.000) is below the predetermined significance threshold of 0.05. The present study employs two-way analysis of variance to investigate heterogeneity in variance across multiple groups. This approach is consistent with the pre-established study objectives and problem specifications established by the researcher. Furthermore, a high level of proficiency in discourse markers significantly impacts students' ability to write professionally in English. The results of the 2-way parametric test demonstrate this by comparing the computed F value with the critical F value from the F table at a significance level of 5%. A statistical significance value of  $0.004 < 0.05$  indicates that the computed F value ( $F = 8.438$ ) is greater than the F table value (3.89).

The third research conclusion demonstrates the correlation between writing techniques and students' proficiency in discourse markers in English writing abilities. Assess the results of the 2-way parametric test by comparing the computed F value with the F table value at a 5% significance level. The computed F value of 9.859 surpasses the critical F value of 3.89 from the standard F table, while the significance value of 0.002 is lower than the predetermined significance level of 0.05. The English writing skills of students are significantly influenced by the relationship between their writing styles and their comprehension of discourse markers. In contrast, the R-squared value of 0.876 suggests that 87.6% of the variation in students' English writing abilities can be accounted for by the combined influence of writing strategies and students' proficiency in usage of discourse markers. Furthermore, the impact of writing strategies on writing outcomes is substantiated by the students' level of competence in learning discourse markers. The hypothesis analysis corroborated the study findings, which provided evidence of a statistically significant correlation between writing strategies and students' competency level (high, medium, and low) in discourse markers. This contact significantly influences pupils' skill in English writing. The investigator performed additional testing using either the follow-up test or Tukey test. Furthermore, analysis demonstrated a statistically significant disparity in the writing abilities of students who received treatment with the writing techniques. The present study emphasizes the necessity of teachers employing writing techniques while instructing students in English writing within the classroom, as well as the methods by which teachers train discourse markers.

**Table 5. Using Tukey Test**

Multiple Comparisons						
Dependent Variable: Writing Skills						
Tukey HSD						
(I) Discourse Markers	(J) Discourse Markers	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
High	Moderate	8.85*	2.536	.001	2.95	16.62
	Low	9.94*	2.631	.002	1.02	15.04
Moderate	High	8.85*	2.536	.001	16.62	2.95
	Low	3.86	2.523	.173	1.47	1.47
Low	High	9.94*	2.631	.002	1.02	15.04
	Moderate	3.86	2.523	.173	1.47	1.47

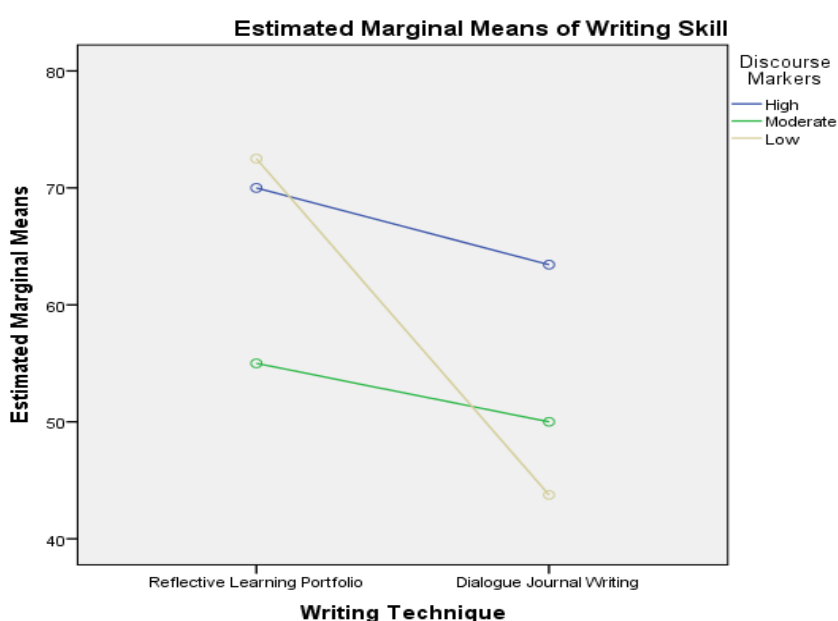
Based on observed means.

The error term is Mean Square (Error) = 60.152.

\*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The interaction between writing techniques and students' English writing skills is shown in Table 5, considering different degrees of discourse marker mastery (high, medium, and poor). Below are the provided findings: 1). The interaction coefficient for discourse markers between high and medium proficiency groups is  $M=8.85$ . A significance value less than 0.05 signifies the rejection of the null hypothesis. A disparity exists in the English writing proficiency of students with high and medium understanding of discourse markers, as confirmed by the present findings. 2). In discourse markers, the interaction coefficient between the high and poor proficiency groups is  $M=9.94$ . Since the significance value is below 0.05, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is abandoned. Research indicates that there is a disparity in English writing proficiency between pupils who have a strong grasp of discourse markers and those who do not. Figure 3). An  $M=8.85$  correlation coefficient exists between medium and high proficiency in speech markers. When the significance level is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is rejected. The study's conclusion is that there exists a discrepancy in the English writing proficiency of students with moderate and high levels of competence in discourse markers. 4). The interaction coefficient between the groups with medium and low mastery of discourse markers is  $M=3.86$ . The significance level exceeds 0.05, therefore confirming the acceptance of  $H_0$ . The results suggest that there is no difference

in the English writing abilities of students categorized as having moderate and low proficiency in communication markers. 5) The interaction coefficient between the groups with low and high proficiency in discourse markers is 9.94. Significance greater than 0.05 leads to rejection of the null hypothesis. Results suggest that there is a difference in English writing abilities among students with low and high levels of competence in discourse markers. 6). A significance level of 0.05 indicates that the interaction coefficient between the low and medium discourse marker mastery groups is 3.86, so accepting the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). The findings suggest that there is no disparity in the English writing abilities of students, regardless of their proficiency levels in the discourse marker. The subsequent graph approximates the marginal average between writing approaches and discourse markers proficiency in relation to students' English writing capabilities. As seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Estimated Marginal Means

The marginal average estimates in the following graph illustrate an interaction graph with three lines that connect with additional lines. Applying writing techniques influences students' English writing proficiency by engaging with their command of discourse markers, irrespective of their accomplishment level. This demonstrates an interaction between writing techniques and discourse markers on students' writing proficiency. The three lines, colour-coded to indicate high (blue), moderate (green), and low (yellow) discourse marker proficiency, reveal notable trends. Writing skill is consistently higher in the reflective learning portfolio group across all discourse marker levels than the dialogue journal writing group, indicating that the reflective learning portfolio technique is more effective for skill development. Additionally, individuals with high discourse marker proficiency demonstrated the best writing performance in both groups. In contrast, those with low discourse marker proficiency showed the steepest decline in writing skills, especially in the dialogue journal writing condition. This suggests that discourse marker mastery significantly influences writing proficiency and that learners with lower proficiency may struggle more with dialogue journal writing than with reflective learning portfolio. Overall, the graph highlights the interaction between writing technique and discourse marker proficiency, emphasizing the potential benefits of the reflective learning portfolio approach in fostering better writing outcomes.

### 3.2 Discussion

This study yielded three key findings: (1) differences exist in students' writing skills based on the writing techniques used; (2) writing proficiency varies significantly among students categorized as having high, medium, or low mastery of discourse markers; and (3) an interaction effect occurs between the writing techniques and students' discourse marker proficiency in influencing their English writing skills.

The first major finding highlights distinct variations in writing skills resulting from the use of different writing techniques, specifically Reflective Learning Portfolios (RLP) and Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW). These results support previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of reflective learning techniques in improving writing outcomes (Boumediene et al., 2018; Dabbagh, 2017; De Silva & Graham, 2015; Fatoni, 2019; Foroutan & Noordin, 2012; Hapsari et al., 2018; Nor, 2017; Reyes-Chua et al., 2020; Yulianawati et al., 2022). The RLP technique enhances critical thinking, student autonomy, and structured problem-solving, allowing students to explore and analyze ideas more independently. Meanwhile, DJW promotes effective teacher-student collaboration, facilitates emotional expression, and encourages authentic, communicative language use. Further reinforcing these findings, studies have demonstrated that RLP significantly improves self-regulation, coherence, and engagement with structured feedback in ESL/EFL contexts (Farahian et al., 2021). Similarly, DJW has been shown to reduce writing anxiety, foster emotional expression, and enhance syntactic complexity among language learners (Maneepakathorn, 2023). Thus, both methods significantly benefit writing proficiency, particularly within language-learning environments.

The second key finding reveals clear differences in students' writing proficiency corresponding to their level of mastery in using discourse markers (high, medium, and low). This aligns with previous research underscoring the essential role of discourse markers in developing coherent and logically structured writing (AbuSa'aleek, 2022; Aysu, 2023; Karaata et al., 2012; Manan & Raslee, 2018; Modhish, 2012; Riznanda, 2021; Suryadi et al., 2024; Taweel, 2020). Results indicated that students with higher proficiency in discourse markers produced writing with significantly greater coherence and logical flow. Analysis of pre-test, post-test, and follow-up data identified significant differences across proficiency groups, particularly between high versus medium, high versus low, medium versus high, and low versus high groups. These results confirm previous findings on the positive relationship between the effective use of discourse markers and improved writing quality, especially in structuring logical coherence (A. M. et al., 2024; Hazem et al., 2021). Consequently, students' ability to accurately and effectively use discourse markers directly correlates with their overall writing proficiency.

A potential interaction between the employment of writing techniques and the effects of discourse markers on English writing skill is the final study topic. The research findings indicate that there is a significant interaction impact between the employment of writing techniques and the mastery of discourse markers on English writing skills. A conclusion is reached that the implementation of writing techniques can serve as a substitute technique to address writing difficulties in writing educational settings. Effective implementation of explicit instruction, peer feedback, and teacher feedback in reflective learning portfolios classes might enhance the efficacy of the writing technique in enhancing students' writing abilities, as compared to the dialogue journal writing technique. This perspective is reinforced by recent studies suggesting that adapting RLP, particularly in electronic form (e-Portfolios), have shown effectiveness in promoting professional development and critical thinking in higher education (Dunne & Logue, 2021; Ziegelbauer & D'errico, 2021). Besides, online DJW can be an effective tool for developing writing productivity and meeting specific learner needs (Cahyono & Deliany, 2022). Therefore, instead of treating them as separate techniques, integrating their strengths, such as RLP's structured reflection and DJW's interactive engagement, can provide a more balanced and comprehensive writing instruction approach. Future research should explore flexible frameworks that blend elements of both for optimal writing improvement.

Furthermore, it is imperative for high school students, particularly those attending MA Negeri 1 Serang, Indonesia, to acquire proficiency in discourse markers to enhance their writing abilities.

Proficient mastery of discourse markers is essential for students to enhance their writing abilities. Discourse markers exhibit a greater degree of coherence and integration activity, particularly when used for referencing purposes. Analysis of discourse markers indicates a high degree of student engagement. This third study presents novel discoveries that have not been previously investigated or evaluated. Specifically, this third study introduces a new research approach by combining the variables of writing techniques with the mastery of discourse markers in English writing skills. The main advantages of this new research are its concentrated attention on discourse markers, practical implementations, empirical verification, and congruence with present educational requirements, therefore representing a significant addition to the field of writing education. Moreover, the incorporation of several techniques for writing together with discourse markers offers a comprehensive structure for enhancing writing skills. This holistic methodology promotes a more profound comprehension of not just the structural aspects of writing but also efficient methods of communication. The integration of studies on these factors provides a fresh viewpoint on writing education that has the potential to greatly enhance students' skills.

This research significantly improves our understanding of the relationship between writing techniques, discourse marker proficiency, and students' writing skills in English language learning. By confirming the strong connection between these writing methods and the effective use of discourse markers, the study enriches writing education theory and sets a solid foundation for future research. The findings suggest that focusing explicitly on discourse markers can help students develop clearer, more coherent, and cohesive writing.

For educators, the study provides valuable insights into how enhancing students' understanding of discourse markers, alongside targeted writing strategies, can improve their overall writing proficiency. Teachers are therefore encouraged to adjust curricula to include specific instruction on discourse markers and writing methods, aligning writing instruction more closely with contemporary communication standards. Gaining mastery in these areas helps students think critically about their writing, improving their analytical and expressive abilities, which can benefit them academically across various disciplines.

Consequently, students are advised to manage their time and effort strategically, focusing on improving their proficiency with discourse markers as part of their English language studies. For educators, these results offer practical guidance for designing effective instructional practices that enhance writing competence. Additionally, this research provides a valuable reference for future studies on writing instruction, encouraging continued innovation and exploration of new teaching methodologies. Overall, these findings clarify the importance of discourse marker proficiency and writing skills within English language education, deepening readers' understanding of the factors influencing students' writing performance and their practical implications.

Incorporating discourse markers, reflective learning portfolios, and dialogue journal writing into the curriculum can be achieved through a methodical manner that progressively enhances writing skills. Discourse markers ought to be instructed progressively, commencing with their introduction and analysis in actual texts, followed by controlled exercises like gap filling and sentence integration, and culminating in use within extended writing, accompanied by feedback from instructors and peers. In reflective learning portfolios, students assemble a writing portfolio that demonstrates their progression, encompassing early drafts, changes informed by feedback, and reflections on their use of discourse markers to enhance coherence. Educators can give incremental writing tasks that promote students' activation and refinement of discourse markers across diverse text kinds.

Simultaneously, dialogue journal writing can enhance writing proficiency via writing-centric interactions. Students compose weekly diaries that emphasise the utilisation of discourse markers to sustain coherence and continuity in written exchanges with peers or teachers. DJW assignments may encompass argumentation debates, experiential comparisons, or cause-and-effect studies, with teachers offering targeted criticism to enhance the structural quality of students' writing. By methodically incorporating these three components, the curriculum can facilitate the incremental enhancement of

students' writing skills, advancing from fundamental comprehension to autonomous application across many academic and communicative settings.

This study possesses some shortcomings that warrant acknowledgement. A primary drawback is the generalisability of the findings, as the sample size and particular educational context may not adequately reflect wider student groups. Subsequent research ought to use larger and more heterogeneous samples to improve external validity. Moreover, potential biases may stem from factors including students' previous writing experience, motivation levels, or differing instructor feedback approaches, which could affect outcomes. For instance, students with prior exposure to academic writing may demonstrate a higher proficiency in discourse marker usage, potentially skewing results. Similarly, motivation plays a crucial role in writing development, as highly motivated students may engage more actively with writing techniques, while less motivated learners might not exhibit the same degree of progress. Additionally, instructor feedback may vary in explicitness and depth, leading to inconsistencies in student development across different classes or institutions. Addressing these biases requires standardized instructional approaches, controlled experimental settings, and longitudinal tracking of student progress. A more rigorous experimental design or longitudinal investigations could alleviate these biases.

Future research should investigate various writing strategies beyond Reflective Learning Portfolios and Dialogue Journal Writing to gain greater insights into their efficacy in enhancing writing skills. Comparative analyses using alternative instructional methods, including collaborative writing, digital storytelling, or AI-assisted writing feedback, may produce significant insights. Additionally, investigating the influence of cultural contexts on discourse marker use and writing progression would be advantageous, as linguistic structures and rhetorical practices may differ among various language learners. Cross-cultural studies may provide a more thorough knowledge of the use of discourse markers in various academic writing traditions.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study found significant differences in students' writing proficiency resulting from the application of different writing techniques and their mastery of discourse markers. Specifically, students who effectively used discourse markers, categorized at high, medium, or low levels, demonstrated varied improvements in their writing abilities. Teachers can strengthen students' writing by explicitly integrating discourse markers and reflective writing techniques, such as Reflective Learning Portfolios and Dialogue Journal Writing, into daily lessons. Structured modeling, guided practice, peer review, and consistent feedback are crucial instructional strategies. Despite these positive outcomes, this study was limited by focusing on a single educational context and age group. Future research could investigate the effectiveness of these strategies with younger students or adult learners, extend the duration of interventions to measure long-term impacts, and explore cultural influences on the implementation of reflective writing methods. Additionally, future studies might benefit from qualitative approaches, including interviews and case studies, to deepen understanding of students' engagement and perceptions regarding discourse markers and reflective writing.

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