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Orthographic Accuracy and Error Patterns in Brazilian Portuguese-English Bilingual Students with Dyslexia

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Abstract

This pilot study investigates the writing accuracy of five dyslexic students (L1: Brazilian Portuguese; L2: English) enrolled in an international bilingual school in Rio de Janeiro. The study examines whether students' writing errors reflect language-specific orthography or cross-linguistic transfer between Portuguese and English. A dictation task in both languages was administered, and responses were coded for error type and descriptively analysed across overall accuracy, lexical, and orthographic properties. Results showed higher accuracy in Brazilian Portuguese than in English. Error patterns differed across languages: accentuation errors were more common in Portuguese, whereas mixed-rule errors predominated in English. Accentuation errors emerged as a frequent yet heterogeneous category, suggesting both orthographic and prosodic difficulties. Low-frequency and cognate words elicited more errors in English. L2-specific grapheme-phoneme pairs (eg. h~/h/) triggered more mixed-rule errors in English, whereas L1-specific pairs (eg. lh~/l/) elicited more accentuation errors in Portuguese. Overall, preliminary findings suggest systematic orthographic transfer and active use of L2 orthographic rules.