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Teaching and learning cursive writing: differences and similarities between brazilian and portuguese research¹

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Abstract: This article focuses on the teaching and learning of cursive writing in Brazilian and Portuguese research and is based on the following question: What differences and similarities in the teaching and learning of cursive writing are evident in research from Brazil and Portugal? To this end, the objective is to analyze, through a literature review conducted across various databases, the teaching and learning of cursive handwriting in Brazilian and Portuguese research, highlighting the differences and similarities related to its importance, the challenges involved, and the methodological strategies used in the literacy process. Given the historical ties between the two countries, this study argues that fostering dialogue on literacy-related aspects — such as cursive writing — can enrich the debate and expand the repertoire of literacy educators in both contexts. To analyze the content of the 18 selected studies, published between 2010 and 2023, three main themes were identified: (1) the difficulties faced by teachers and students, (2) the importance attributed to cursive writing, and (3) the methodological strategies employed. The discussion is grounded in selected contributions on written language by Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky, Lev Vygotsky, Magda Soares, and Maria Iolanda Monteiro. The results highlight the complementarity between the research conducted in the two countries and the potential for new joint studies between Brazilian and Portuguese researchers.

Keywords: cursive writing; literacy; teaching and learning; Brazil; Portugal.

1 Introduction

A historical review of the literacy process in Brazil shows that it was closely linked to Portuguese educational practices because of the country's colonial roots. When Portugal arrived in Brazil in the 15th century, the indigenous peoples' nonliterate culture was replaced by a literacy-centered culture characterized by the use of a writing system. During the colonial period, the Society of Jesus established the first schools for reading, writing, and arithmetic (Paiva, 2000).

While not disregarding the plurality of cultures that have shaped the country, some trends have gradually been overcome. In contrast, others remain part of the

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school tradition (Monteiro, 2010) when characterizing the reading and writing practices undertaken in Brazil from Portuguese colonization to the present day. However, these trends must be constantly reviewed to respond to new social demands and pedagogical discussions in each context.

One element of Brazil's school and literacy tradition is cursive writing. Studies by Silveira (2019; 2022), which analyzed school notebooks produced between 1937 and 2015, show that this practice has persisted over time. Despite differing theoretical orientations and literacy policies, cursive writing has remained part of everyday school life and teaching practices (Silveira, 2019).

Although cursive writing occupies a certain space in school practices, studies focusing on it are scarce, especially in the scientific sphere. In the available studies, references to literacy professors' doubts and concerns about how, when, and why to continue teaching and learning this type of handwriting are common (Brito, 2013; Cargnin; Silva, 2020; Schwabe; Lottermann, 2021).

Recently, there have been reports of handwriting being reinstated in school curricula, as in California, due to studies emphasizing its motor and cognitive advantages. In this context, cursive writing remains widely taught in Western Europe, including Portugal (BBC News, 2024).

In Brazil, the National Common Core Curriculum (Base Nacional Comum Curricular - BNCC) mentions cursive writing as part of the literacy process in the early years of elementary school (Brazil, 2018). In Portugal, the Essential Learning Outcomes include cursive writing in the first cycle (Portugal, 2018). These official references for school practices support the idea that the discussion of cursive writing cannot be ignored. Furthermore, neuroscientific research has reinforced the importance of this discussion by demonstrating that handwriting, and more specifically, cursive writing, activates specific patterns of brain activity related to language development, reading, and memory. This distinguishes it from digital writing, for example (BBC News, 2024; James; Engelhardt, 2012).

Building on Oliveira's (2014) work, which highlights key themes in the literacy landscape of Brazil and Portugal, this paper argues that fostering dialogue between these countries on cursive writing could enrich the discourse and broaden the scope of literacy educators. Thus, the following question guides this article: What differences

and similarities in the teaching and learning of cursive writing are evident in research from Brazil and Portugal?

The objective is to analyze the teaching and learning of cursive writing in Brazilian and Portuguese research, highlighting differences and similarities in its importance, associated difficulties, and the methodological strategies involved in the literacy process. To this end, we conducted a basic qualitative bibliographic study (Gil, 2010). We conducted a literature review across various databases (Gil, 2008), enabling us to compile 18 studies published between 2010 and 2023. These studies were characterized in terms of their general aspects and analyzed in three key areas regarding the teaching and learning of cursive writing in the literacy process: (1) the difficulties faced by professors and students, (2) the importance attributed to cursive writing, and (3) the methodological strategies employed.

To provide a foundation for the discussion, we drew upon the work of Vygotsky (1991), Ferreiro and Teberosky (1985), Soares (1998, 2002, 2012, 2015), and Monteiro (2010). Because cursive writing is linked to broader writing practices and literacy acquisition and development, these authors provide theoretical support for the reflections presented here.

This article is structured into five sections. The first section is this introduction and presents the topic, rationale, guiding question, objective, methodology, and theoretical framework of the research. The second section details the methodological approach used to identify Brazilian and Portuguese studies, provides an overview of their characteristics, and culminates in the definition of three content-related analysis axes. The third section discusses the analysis axis concerning the difficulties in teaching and learning cursive writing. The fourth section discusses the analysis axes regarding the importance of cursive writing and the strategies used to teach it. The fifth section presents the research's final considerations.

2 An Overview of brazilian and portuguese research on cursive handwriting

The Brazilian research studies were retrieved from the following databases: Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO)², the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações - BDTD)³, the

² Scientific Electronic Library Online. Available at: <https://www.scielo.br/>.

³ Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations. Available at: <https://bdtd.ibict.br/vufind/>.

Journal Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Portal de Periódicos da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior - CAPES)⁴, and Academic Google⁵. In each database, the search terms “cursive” and, subsequently, “cursive writing” were entered; the number of results is shown in the following table.

Table 1 – List of Databases and Results

Database	Results in cursive	Cursive writing results
SciELO	5	5
BDTD	22	27
CAPES	25	21
Academic Google	20	27
Total surveys	72	80

Source: the authors (2025).

As shown in Table 1, searches using the keyword “cursive letters” yielded 72 results, while searches using the keyword “cursive writing” yielded 80 results. For the selection, the following inclusion criteria were adopted: open-access research classified as articles, theses, or dissertations; written in Portuguese; produced in Brazil; related to the field of education; and which, based on their titles and abstracts, addressed cursive script—or associated terms such as handwriting and handwritten text — within the context of its teaching and learning in the literacy process. Accordingly, 10 studies were selected for analysis, and their key information is summarized in the chart below.

Chart 1 – Brazilian studies selected for a study on cursive writing in the literacy process

Title	Origin/type	Author(s)/year
A Typology of Handwriting Styles Used in the Early Stages of Schooling in Rio Grande do Sul, as Seen in Students' Notebooks (1937–2015)	Revista Brasileira de História da Educação (article)	Alessandra Amaral da Silveira (2022)
The Use of Different Handwriting Styles in Literacy Activities: An Analysis of Notebooks Used Between the 1990s and the 2010s	Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul (master's dissertation)	Aliene Pinto da Rosa (2023)

⁴ Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel. Available at: <https://www.periodicos.capes.gov.br/>.

⁵ Available at: <https://scholar.google.com.br/?hl=p>.

A typology of handwriting styles used in the early stages of schooling in Rio Grande do Sul: school graphic culture as reflected in students' notebooks (1937–2015)	Universidade Federal de Pelotas (Doctoral thesis)	Alessandra Amaral da Silveira (2019)
On orthographic (calli)graphic practices: a study on modes of disciplining and standardizing writing	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (master's thesis)	Patricia Camini (2010)
Processes of teaching and learning (or failure to learn) cursive writing in the school context	Revista de Estudos Acadêmicos de Letras (article)	Vanessa Rafaela Trierweiler Cargnin; Veronice Camargo da Silva (2020)
BNCC and cursive writing: a study on the perceptions of teachers in the municipal school system of Lajeado, Rio Grande do Sul	Revista Thema (article)	Cláudia Redecker Schwabe; Anastácia Lottermann (2021)
New Ways of Writing: Literacy Without Cursive	Revista Leia Escola (article)	Sinval Martins de Sousa Filho; Pedro Henrique da Silva (2020)
Design in Education: A Strategy for Handwritten Cursive in the Age of Digital Natives	Revista Projetica (article)	Juliana Oliveira Guimarães; Sérgio Antônio Silva (2017)
Design and Education: An Interdisciplinary Strategy for Handwritten Cursive in the Age of Digital Natives	12º Congresso Brasileiro de Pesquisa e Desenvolvimento em Design (article)	Juliana Oliveira Guimarães; Sérgio Antônio Silva (2016)
Reflections on the Teaching of Cursive in a Public School in Porto Alegre	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (article)	Aline Araujo Brito (2013)

Source: the authors (2025).

As Chart 1 shows, the studies were conducted between 2010 and 2023. A total of seven articles, two master's theses, and one doctoral dissertation were selected. Additionally, research conducted at universities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul stands out.

The survey of Portuguese research on cursive writing was conducted in the Portuguese Open Access Scientific Repositories (Repositórios Científicos de Acesso Aberto de Portugal - RCAAP)⁶. The initial search was conducted in the "University" directory and covered 23 repositories from Portuguese universities and institutes. The search terms "cursive script" and "cursive writing" were used separately.

In repositories that yielded many results, we refined the searches using the available filters. We selected departments and colleges related to the humanities and

⁶ Portuguese Open Access Scientific Repositories. Available at: <https://www.rcaap.pt/>.

social sciences at the consulted universities and institutes. We also selected the subject areas Educational Sciences, Elementary Education (1st Cycle), and Writing.

Searches for the keywords “cursive letters” and “cursive writing” in the repositories of Portuguese universities and institutes yielded 1,020 and 1,302 results, respectively. The highest numbers were found at the Universidade de Lisboa (308 and 413 results), followed by the Universidade Nova de Lisboa (226 and 252), the Universidade Atlântica (106 and 224), and the Universidade de Coimbra (165 and 157). Also notable were the Universidade de Aveiro (27 and 68), the Universidade do Minho (39 and 28), the Universidade Aberta (24 and 27), the Universidade do Porto (18 and 21), the Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro (19 and 14), the Universidade da Beira Interior (25 and 15), the Universidade Católica Portuguesa (11 and 29), the Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (11 and 15), ISPA – Instituto Universitário (12 and 15), and the Universidade do Algarve (11 and 11).

With fewer occurrences, the following stood out: Universidade Fernando Pessoa (4 and 5 results), the Universidade de Azores (3 and 4), the Universidade da Madeira (2 and 3), and Universidade Portucalense (2 and 1). The Autonomous University of Lisbon, Lusíada University, Universidade Lusófona, the Universidade de Évora, and the Universidade Europeia, however, yielded no results for any of the search terms.

Similar to the criteria used in Brazilian studies, the selection included open-access studies classified as articles, theses, or dissertations written in Portuguese related to education. These studies allowed identification of the approach to cursive writing or associated terms, such as handwriting and handwritten text, in the context of teaching and learning within the literacy process, by reviewing their titles and abstracts. The only difference in the criteria was that it considered only studies produced in Portugal, resulting in the selection of four studies.

In a second step, to expand the results, the same two search terms were entered into the RCAAP homepage search bar, which covers all indexed documents. This yielded eight new results for “cursive script” and 20 for “cursive writing.” After applying the same inclusion criteria and excluding duplicate or previously selected studies, four new studies were selected. Thus, eight Portuguese academic studies were obtained for analysis. The key information from each study is summarized in the following chart.

Chart 2 – Portuguese studies selected for a study on cursive writing in the literacy process

Title	Origin/ type	Author(s)/ year
Italic Cursive Handwriting in the Teaching and Learning of Portuguese in the 1st Cycle of Basic Education	Universidade de Lisboa (master's dissertation)	Mariana de Loureiro Henriques (2021)
Handwriting in Children's Books: Legibility and Readability	Universidade do Algarve (master's dissertation)	Célia Isabel Tamissa Serra (2023)
Graphic Stability of Written Work and Children's Conceptualizations of Written Language: Cursive Handwriting and Typing	Instituto Universitário (article)	Tiago Almeida; Ana Cristina Silva (2017)
Teaching Practices and Learning Difficulties in Reading and Writing in the Early Years of Basic Education	Instituto Universitário (master's dissertation)	Carolina Costa Varela (2023)
The contribution of psychomotor skills to early reading and writing acquisition	Universidade Católica Portuguesa (master's dissertation)	Joana Filipa Lopes Fidalgo dos Santos (2014)
An Approach to Writing in Preschool: Literature Recommendations Regarding Cursive and Block Letters	Escola Superior de Educação de Fafe (master's final report)	Mariana de Afonseca Guimarães (2017)
The Effect of Spatial Constraints on Cursive Writing in Left-Handed Children in the 1st Cycle: A Qualitative Analysis	Instituto Politécnico de Santarém (article)	David Catela; Marco Branco; Ana Paula Seabra; Gonçalo Gomes; Daniel Ferreira (2019)
Problems with cursive writing in the first cycle of elementary school: the effect of a perceptual-motor stimulation program	Instituto Politécnico de Santarém (article)	Ana Chambel; David Catela (2020)

Source: the authors (2025).

The studies span the years 2014 through 2023. The collection includes five master's theses and three articles. The Instituto Politécnico de Santarém and the Instituto Universitário had the most studies on cursive writing.

After compiling the 18 studies, each work was individually cataloged. In addition to the information presented in Charts 1 and 2, certain general aspects of the Brazilian and Portuguese studies were compared. The results of this comparison are shown in the chart below.

Chart 3 – Comparison of general aspects between Brazilian and Portuguese studies

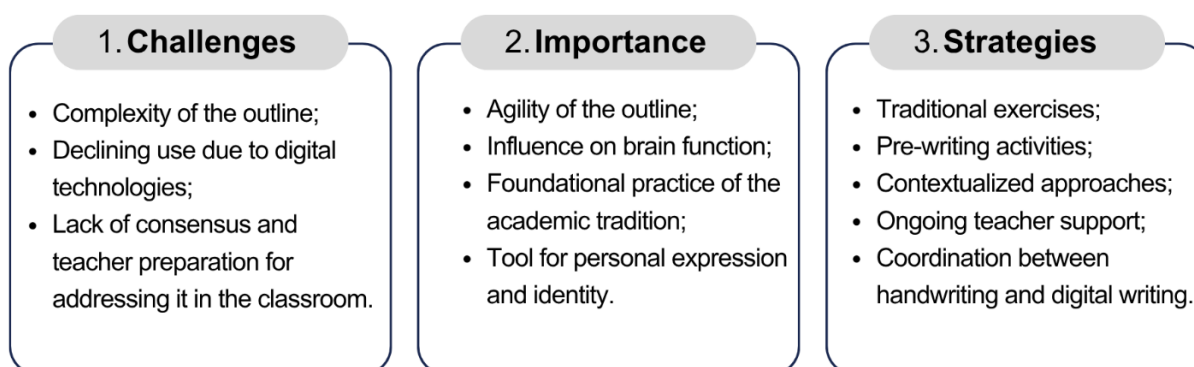
Comparative Analysis	Brazil	Portugal
Search results for the terms "cursive letters" and "cursive writing"	Fewer results and more studies met the inclusion criteria (10).	A higher number of results and a lower number of studies that met the inclusion criteria (8).

Type of publication	Predominance of articles (7).	A predominance of master's-level studies (5). *Greater rigor.
Time period	2010–2023	2014–2023
Keywords	Most frequent: “cursive” (9); “literacy” (5) and “writing” (5). Least frequent: “mandatory” and “print capital letters.” *This suggests a close relationship between cursive and debates on literacy and written culture.	Most frequent: “cursive writing” (3) and “handwriting” (3). Less frequent: “orthographic-motor integration” and “psychomotor competence.” *Suggests an association between cursive writing and a graphic skill.
Methodology	Largest number of documentary studies (4). Smallest number of field studies (3) and bibliographic studies (3).	A higher number of field studies (5). Fewer bibliographic studies (3), two of which were combined with field studies. No documentary studies (0).
Authors most frequently cited in discussions of literacy and/or written culture.	Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky are most prominently featured. Other frequently cited authors include Magda Soares, Roger Chartier, and Patricia Camini. Predominance of Brazilian authors.	Emilia Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky are the most prominent. Other frequently cited authors include Steve Graham, Virginia Berninger, and Magda Soares. International authors associated with cognitive psychology, psychomotricity, and neuroscience predominate.

Source: the authors (2025).

In addition to comparing the general aspects of the studies, the content addressed in the 18 identified studies was also analyzed. For this stage, three areas of analysis were defined. These areas were organized based on the studies' focus on the teaching and learning of cursive writing in the literacy process. The axes and main points identified while reviewing the studies related to each area are shown in the following figure.

Figure 1 – Areas of analysis and key points identified in studies from Brazil and Portugal



Source: the authors (2025).

Next, we discuss the three defined areas of analysis, highlighting the differences and similarities between Brazilian and Portuguese research. This discussion compares the research data with the contributions of the authors who developed the study's theoretical framework.

3 Challenges in teaching and learning cursive writing versus the importance attributed to it

In the Brazilian context, studies (Brito, 2013; Rosa, 2023) suggest that many elementary school students struggle with cursive writing, which can lead to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. Cursive writing is considered a more labor-intensive activity that requires specific skills. In contrast, block letters are easier for children to read and write because they involve less control and muscle tension (Silveira, 2022). Students often have difficulty transitioning from block letters to cursive and adapting to its unique characteristics, which can hinder learning outcomes (Silveira, 2019; 2022).

In Portugal, the complexity of cursive strokes requires greater attention, effort, and visual and motor control due to continuous movements such as loops, rings, and arcs (Catela *et al.*, 2019; Varela, 2023). Common difficulties among elementary school students include megalography, spatial inconsistency, letter substitutions and omissions, illegibility, and imprecision in stroke formation. These issues are often associated with limitations in fine motor skills and improper pencil handling (Chambel; Catela, 2020; Santos, 2014). The omission of ligatures between letters hinders correct word pronunciation, and print letters are perceived as more familiar to children due to their greater presence in daily life. This makes the transition to cursive writing challenging (Almeida; Silva, 2017; Guimarães, 2017; Henriques, 2021; Serra, 2023; Varela, 2023).

According to Monteiro (2010), writing, which transforms speech into a visible form, is considered complex and requires specific skills. This explains the difficulties encountered when learning its conventions. Writing encompasses the ability to convert phonemes into graphemes and the motor and orthographic skills involved in even the simplest act, such as signing one's name (Soares, 2012). Vygotsky (1984, as cited in Rego, 1995) identified writing as a higher psychological function, defined as a sophisticated, non-innate human mental process involving consciously controlled actions refined through the internalization of cultural forms of behavior.

Regarding the impact of digital technologies, Brazilian and Portuguese studies indicate that new forms of reading and writing have reduced contact with handwriting and its traditional media. These studies favor the use of digital devices and reinforce the predominance of printed text, which is more prevalent in the media and in everyday life (Almeida; Silva, 2017; Guimarães; Silva, 2016, 2017; Henriques, 2021; Sousa; Silva, 2020). This contributes to the devaluation of cursive handwriting and reduced interest in teaching it. Questions also remain about its viability in schools, given that new demands associate typing with greater efficiency (Brito, 2013; Camini, 2010). Soares (2015) believes that, even though there are horizons that extend beyond handwriting, it will not be abandoned. Considering handwriting and digital writing together makes it clear that "[...] each of these technologies has certain social, cognitive, and discursive effects [...]" (Soares, 2002, p. 143). As these technologies coexist, they show different forms of literacy, or different ways of using writing in social life.

Despite this, professors in Brazil lack consensus on whether cursive writing belongs in the curriculum. This is evident through their doubts about why, how, and when to teach it (Brito, 2013; Cargnin; Silva, 2020; Pires, 2021; Schwabe; Lottermann, 2021). Added to this are the fragility of teachers' theoretical and practical knowledge, the difficulty of breaking away from entrenched conceptions of literacy, limited support from academic literature and didactic textbooks, and constraints on school time. These factors result in practices that are neither diverse nor engaging (Camini, 2010; Brito, 2013; Rosa, 2023; Schwabe; Lottermann, 2021). In Portugal, teachers have expressed concerns about pedagogical practices, limited familiarity with specific methods, and insufficient exploration of writing prerequisites due to curricular requirements and heavy course loads (Chambel, 2021; Henriques, 2021; Santos, 2014). Guimarães (2017) points out contradictions between teaching practices, didactic textbooks, and social expectations. These discrepancies require attention, especially given that literacy teachers must understand all facets (psychological and sociolinguistic) and determining factors (social, cultural, political, and ideological) of literacy (Soares, 2012) and know how to incorporate them into pedagogical planning.

A review of 18 studies suggests that in Portugal, there is a greater emphasis on students' difficulties with cursive writing. In Brazil, however, tensions between handwriting and digital technologies, as well as teachers' uncertainties about the

relevance of teaching cursive, are highlighted. In Portugal, however, there is greater consensus on including cursive writing in the school curriculum.

While difficulties are identified, the importance of teaching and learning cursive writing is also acknowledged. Brazilian studies (Cargnin; Silva, 2020; Schwabe; Lottermann, 2021; Silveira, 2019) emphasize the efficiency and speed of cursive writing, as well as its contribution to the development of motor coordination. Additionally, its continuous strokes facilitate the visualization of word unity and textual structuring (Brito, 2013). Similarly, Portuguese studies (Guimarães, 2017; Henriques, 2021; Varela, 2023) emphasize the elegance and fluidity of cursive writing. These studies also note that cursive writing can develop fine motor skills, motivate literacy, and improve text quality because the rhythm of the strokes follows the flow of thought.

Drawing on neuroscience studies, research from both countries highlights the link between handwriting and brain activity stimulation. These studies suggest that cursive writing fosters cognitive abilities that surpass those associated with digital writing. These abilities include memory, concentration, and organization. Additionally, cursive writing contributes to other areas of academic learning (Guimarães; Silva, 2016, 2017; Henriques, 2021; Schwabe; Lottermann, 2021; Varela, 2023).

Brazilian authors emphasize that cursive handwriting is an integral part of academic writing and a hallmark of a tradition that endures despite changes in curricula and perspectives (Silveira, 2019). A similar argument appears in Portuguese studies, which recognize cursive handwriting as part of the educational process (Chambel; Catela, 2020). This aligns with the idea that some trends fade over time, while others remain part of the school curriculum (Monteiro, 2010).

Attention is drawn to the uniqueness of cursive writing and its ability to express each individual's identity and individuality (Serra; Varela, 2023). Studies in Portugal argue that children have the right to their own form of written expression, in terms of both the content they write and the way they form their letters (Henriques, 2021). Studies from Brazil reinforce this idea, viewing cursive writing as a more personalized artistic form of expression acquired during the literacy process and stylized according to individual creativity and preferences (Guimarães; Silva, 2016, 2017; Schwabe; Lottermann, 2021). We note the caveat in Soares's (2015) advice that care must be taken in the classroom to ensure children's handwriting is legible, since "[...] if writing

is a form of communication, it must enable others to read what is being communicated" (Soares, 2015, p. 10).

In contrast, in Portugal, the importance of cursive is sometimes associated with calligraphy, with the terms used interchangeably at times—a phenomenon not observed in Brazilian studies (Varela, 2023). Furthermore, only Brazilian studies emphasize that, although less common, cursive writing remains part of everyday social practices, such that failing to learn it can limit an individual's participation in everyday reading and writing situations (Cargnin; Silva, 2020; Schwabe; Lottermann, 2021). This point resonates with Vygotsky, for whom learning to write enables a different kind of access to the heritage accumulated by humanity and a new form of communication with the world (Rego, 1995).

4 Methodological strategies used in the teaching and learning of cursive handwriting

Regarding the third area of analysis, which is methodological strategies for teaching and learning cursive writing, Brazilian studies describe activities such as connecting letters, syllables, and words, transcribing from print to cursive, following directional dotted lines, prioritizing the writing of one's name, and using songs or rhymes to memorize stroke sequences (Brito, 2013; Camini, 2010; Rosa, 2023; Silveira, 2019). In Portugal, calligraphy is explicitly taught, sometimes through traditional expository methods (Guimarães, 2017; Varela, 2023). However, this trend requires caution, since learning to write through reductionist methods involving massive repetition reduces the individual to merely a replicator of graphic signs (Monteiro, 2010, p. 59). Therefore, Monteiro (2010, p. 59) warns that defining it as a language is at risk because it takes on a mechanical form. Students can write letters and words but cannot produce writing that enables them to communicate ideas, opinions, critiques, and interpretations. It is important to ensure that "literacy through writing" is not undermined (Soares, 1998). According to Soares's (1998) definition, a literate individual is not merely someone who can read and write, but rather someone who uses reading and writing socially, practices reading and writing, and responds appropriately to social demands for reading and writing (p. 40).

Returning to the analyzed studies, so-called pre-writing exercises stand out before systematic writing instruction. These activities help children develop muscle

strength, flexibility, and dexterity in their hands (Camini, 2010). Santos (2014) emphasizes that handwriting develops through playful activities that promote handedness, auditory and visual discrimination, spatiotemporal organization, and proper use of writing instruments, not solely through stroke repetition. Thus, in addition to shapes such as dots, arcs, waves, and spirals (Camini, 2010; Varela, 2023), emphasis is placed on psychomotor development, from gross to fine motor coordination. This development should begin in early childhood education in Brazil or preschool in Portugal, as well as with early exposure to written materials. According to Ferreiro and Teberosky (1985), children can produce texts from an early age if they have writing materials to manipulate and are encouraged to record their thoughts.

Studies by Luria (2006, cited in Monteiro, 2010), one of Vygotsky's key collaborators, show that a child's development of writing does not begin only when they come into contact with pencils and notebooks at school. Vygotsky (1991) believed that writing could be introduced at an early age, beyond formal instruction. In line with this perspective, research suggests activities such as free play, including games like jumping rope, leapfrog, cup and ball, yo-yo, and marbles (Schwabe; Lottermann, 2021). Other suggested activities include walking along different patterns on the floor that simulate writing movements, modeling with play dough or clay, cutting, and painting (Camini, 2010; Henriques, 2021). The text also mentions intermanual challenges that encourage the use of both hands and integrate motor coordination into daily activities such as buttoning clothes or brushing teeth. The text also mentions exposure to the alphabet, movable type, games, transforming letters into drawings, and narratives involving tracing letters (Cargnin; Silva, 2020; Chambel; Catela, 2020).

According to Vygotsky (1991), writing should not be viewed merely as "[...] a habit of the hand and fingers [...]" (Vygotsky, 1991, p. 133). Research should emphasize preparatory activities and encourage children's spontaneous scribbles (Camini, 2010). Students must write and reflect on their writing consistently so they become familiar with this language (Schwabe; Lottermann, 2021).

Some studies from both countries emphasize that teaching cursive writing should be contextualized with pedagogical intent. This involves children's active participation in real, functional situations that use meaningful words and topics of interest. These situations should also include different text genres, collaborative writing, and discussions about the social use of different types of handwriting (Cargnin;

Silva, 2020; Guimarães, 2017; Varela, 2023). Alexei Leontiev, a collaborator of Vygotsky's, argues that experiences regarding writing should be connected to concrete life (Leontiev, 1978) so that the meaning children assign to writing depends less on "[...] verbalized concepts and more on socially shared concepts [...]" (Mello, 2010, pp. 332-333). A contextualized introduction to cursive writing also helps foster the emergence of

Instead of a child who gradually acquires a language entirely constructed by others, [...] a child who reconstructs language on their own, selectively drawing on the information provided by the environment (Ferreiro; Teberosky, 1985, p. 22).

Another recurring theme in the analyzed materials is the professor's central role in monitoring, assessing, providing feedback, and adapting activities to the class's abilities and interests (Chambel; Catela, 2020; Henriques, 2021; Varela, 2023). The studies emphasize the importance of providing corrective guidance on handwriting, devoting more time to cursive writing, offering direct support to students, encouraging them through praise, collaborating with families and other professionals, and incorporating neuroscience findings to inform methodological choices (Guimarães, 2017; Silveira, 2019). Ferreiro and Teberosky (1985) explain that the method can facilitate or hinder, but not create, writing learning, as it stems from the child's own actions. By engaging in experiences that are both appropriate and challenging with writing and its representations, children are motivated not only to imitate models but also to transform their initial understandings as they seek to decipher the meaning of writing.

Finally, the analyzed research shows that cursive and digital writing are related. In both contexts, the studies indicate that one does not replace the other; rather, the two practices coexist. The research highlights interdisciplinary approaches and the use of technology to support cursive writing instruction (Almeida; Silva, 2017; Brito, 2013; Guimarães; Silva, 2016, 2017; Sousa Filho; Silva, 2020).

Regarding differences of opinion, the debate over whether to introduce cursive writing alongside other types of handwriting is limited to studies from Brazil. These studies range from recommending a delay in introducing cursive writing to introducing it from the start of literacy instruction to allowing students to choose (Rosa, 2023; Schwabe; Lottermann, 2021; Silveira, 2019, 2022). Soares (2015) recommends using uppercase block letters at the beginning of literacy instruction "[...] because they are

easier for children to trace as they become familiar with the phoneme-grapheme relationship. They are also independent of one another, so the child sees each letter individually, which is not the case with cursive [...]" (Soares, 2015, p. 8). This view is widely held and is based on the work of Ferreiro and Teberosky (1985).

Studies from Portugal, in particular, focus on details such as the use of lined notebooks, paper orientation, body posture, pencil grip, and the interaction between the writing instrument, writing surface, and writer (Catela *et al.*, 2019; Henriques, 2021; Varela, 2023). These studies emphasize the interaction between the writing instrument, the writing surface, and the individual who writes. Additionally, teachers use metaphors to describe the structure of letters ("legs," "bellies," "arms," etc.) to make them more accessible to children (Serra, 2023).

Furthermore, Portuguese research presents intervention programs aimed at children with cursive writing difficulties. These programs describe the stages involved and the duration of the activities. The studies also use quantitative analyses with graphs and calculations to present results (Chambel; Catela, 2020).

5 Final Considerations

This article analyzed Brazilian and Portuguese research on the teaching and learning of cursive writing, highlighting differences and similarities regarding its importance, the difficulties involved, and the strategies used in the literacy process. To this end, studies on this topic from both countries were analyzed.

The literature review showed how academic works from Brazil and Portugal address cursive writing. Although few studies were found in both contexts, the 18 selected for analysis formed a consistent sample, providing a basis for discussion of the predominant general characteristics and content of the texts. Furthermore, the fact that all of these studies were conducted within a recent timeframe underscores the topic's relevance. Brazilian studies can inform Portuguese research methodologies, theoretical frameworks, and aspects of cursive handwriting that could be further explored—and vice versa.

Focusing on the three defined axes of analysis revealed that, while the emphasis placed on each varies—with difficulties prevailing in some cases and importance and/or strategies taking precedence in others—the Brazilian and Portuguese studies engage in dialogue with one another and are complementary. Most

of these studies acknowledge the complexity of cursive writing in literacy and call for further studies to explore it in greater depth.

This article aims to help education professionals reflect on cursive writing by advocating for a view of writing as a language and social practice. From this view, writing instruction should be intentional and meaningful to the child, who is an active participant in their own learning. At the same time, the limitations of the research are acknowledged, given the literature review's restriction to a few databases and the definition of three axes of analysis. Therefore, new studies are needed to enrich the topic from different perspectives. One suggestion for future research is to conduct a comparative analysis of curriculum documents that guide literacy practices in each country and how they address types of handwriting to be taught.

In conclusion, building partnerships and developing joint research initiatives can foster exchange between researchers and professors in Brazil and Portugal. These initiatives expand the theoretical and practical repertoire of education professionals. In addition to cursive writing, such exchanges can strengthen debates and practices related to other aspects of literacy.

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