

**DOSSIER**

*Innovation and tradition in the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices*

**Values and proposals on the radio as an educational medium in Brazil and Spain in the 1930s. A comparative study**

***Valores y propuestas en torno a la radio como medio educativo en Brasil y España en la década de 1930. Un estudio comparativo***

***Valores e propostas em torno do rádio como meio educativo no Brasil e na Espanha na década de 1930. Um estudo comparativo***

**Kelly Ludkiewicz Alves<sup>a</sup>**  
kelly.alves@ufba.br

**Víctor Guijarro Mora<sup>b</sup>**  
victor.guijarro@urjc.es

**ABSTRACT**

This text studies the values promoted around radio, as well as the use of this technology as an educational medium, analyzing and comparing the pedagogical proposals of Brazil and Spain in the 1930s, a period of development and advancement in radio broadcasting. The sources used come, on the one hand, from articles published in specialized journals and broadcasting organs, such as *Ondas* (1925-1936) and *Catalunya Ràdio* (1931-1934), which featured contributions from engineers, educators, and journalists; and, on the other hand, from highly representative manuals, such as *Radio e Educación* (1934) written by Ariosto Espinheira. Various discourses surrounding radio have been identified in these documents, including those related to interclassism, the universalization of culture, democratization, globalization, neutrality, and its civilizing mission. Additionally, the documents reveal projects based on modern pedagogical theories, intended to be applied to the teaching of disciplines such as natural sciences, geography, and others. Based on ideas concerning the use of radio as a mass media medium, possibilist discourses were formulated regarding its educational use. This goal was envisioned to be achieved through a specific format that employed engaging language and playful teaching methods, along with diversified content aligned with a modern curriculum.

**Keywords:** Brazil. Spain. Discourses on radio. Radio pedagogy. History of science education.

**RESUMEN**

El texto estudia los valores promovidos en torno a la radio, así como el uso de esta tecnología como medio educativo, mediante el análisis y comparación de las propuestas pedagógicas de Brasil y España en la década de 1930, un periodo clave para el desarrollo y avance de la radiodifusión. Las fuentes empleadas proceden de artículos publicados en las revistas especializadas y órganos de difusión de las emisoras, como *Ondas*

<sup>a</sup> PhD, EHPS/PUC-SP; Professor, UFBA, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

<sup>b</sup> PhD, UNED; Teaching and Research Professor, URJC, Madrid, España.

(1925-1936) y Catalunya ràdio (1931-1934), donde colaboraban ingenieros, educadores y periodistas. También se consideran manuales representativos, como Radio e Educación (1934), de Ariosto Espinheira. En estos documentos se identifican diferentes discursos sobre la radio, como los relativos al interclasismo, la universalización de la cultura, la democratización, la globalización, la neutralidad y su misión civilizadora. Asimismo, se destacan proyectos basados en las modernas teorías pedagógicas, que se debían aplicar a la enseñanza de disciplinas como las ciencias naturales, la geografía, entre otras. A partir de las ideas en torno al empleo de la radio como medio de difusión masiva, se formularon discursos posibilistas sobre su uso educativo, fin que se cumpliría mediante un formato específico en el que se empleara el lenguaje ameno y los procedimientos del juego como método de enseñanza, además de un contenido diversificado y adecuado a un currículo moderno.

*Palabras clave:* Brasil. España. Discursos sobre la radio. Radiopedagogía. Historia de la educación en ciencias.

## RESUMO

O texto estuda os valores promovidos em torno do rádio, bem como o uso dessa tecnologia como meio educacional, analisando e comparando as propostas pedagógicas do Brasil e da Espanha na década de 1930, período de desenvolvimento e avanço da radiodifusão. As fontes utilizadas provêm de artigos publicados em revistas especializadas e órgãos de emissoras de rádio, como Ondas (1925-1936) e Catalunya Ràdio (1931-1934), onde colaboraram engenheiros, educadores e jornalistas, e também de manuais de grande representatividade, como Rádio e Educação (1934) de Ariosto Espinheira. Esses documentos identificaram diversos discursos sobre o rádio, como os relativos ao interclassismo, à universalização da cultura, à democratização, à globalização, à neutralidade e à sua missão civilizadora, bem como projetos baseados em teorias pedagógicas modernas, que deveriam ser aplicadas ao ensino de disciplinas como ciências naturais, geografia etc. A partir de ideias em torno do uso do rádio como meio de comunicação de massa, foram formulados discursos possibilistas sobre seu uso educacional, objetivo que seria alcançado por meio de um formato específico que empregasse linguagem envolvente e métodos de ensino lúdicos, com conteúdo diversificado e adequado a um currículo moderno.

*Palavras-chave:* Brasil. Espanha. Discursos no radio. Radiopedagogia. História da educação em ciências.

## Introduction

The article<sup>1</sup> presents the elements of a discourse shared during the early stages of radio broadcasting expansion, whose purpose was to create the conditions and construct the imaginaries that would favor overcoming resistance and promote mass acceptance of radio as a new technology capable of providing moments of leisure, but also serving as a means for the dissemination and popularization of scientific and educational content among different audiences and countries.

In this context, we are interested in investigating the debate and proposals for formats and languages for educational broadcasts, based on their international circulation, that is, from a transnational perspective (Roldán & Fuchs, 2021). More specifically, a comparative analysis is carried

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out between the cases of Brazil and Spain, with the aim of identifying the presence and dissemination in both nations of the proposal regarding the defense of radio as an ideal medium for education, as well as its convergences and specificities.

## Discourses on radio in the early stages of its expansion

These discourses circulated largely through magazines affiliated with radio stations, which published news about radio developments (some of which were translations of foreign articles), technical commentary, and other texts of particular interest to this research, which dealt with the projection of radio as a medium. They presented a world of possibilities and expectations linked to the territorial expansion of the technology. In their study on the spread of radio broadcasting in Barcelona in the years leading up to the 1929 International Exposition, the authors (Guzmán and Taberner, 2016, p. 212) quote an excerpt from an article in the magazine *Radiosola* from 1924<sup>2</sup>, which reproduces the terms of the Promethean discourse commonly used in technical innovations:

¿Es la radiotelefonía un invento más significativo que la imprenta? Los servicios que ofreció esta invención en el siglo XX superan en parte los que ofreció la invención de Gutenberg. ¿Qué libro, qué revista leen veinte millones de personas? Un discurso político [...] o una conferencia pueden ser escuchados por diez o veinte millones de personas. [Y] ni siquiera es necesario que quienes la escuchan sepan el alfabeto. La radiotelefonía es el medio más eficiente y maravilloso para que la humanidad difunda sus ideas<sup>3</sup>.

Further on, new elements of this discourse are offered. Thus, it is indicated that both *Radio Barcelona* magazine and the radio station to which it was affiliated acted as powerful promoters of the institutions and industries committed to the communications enterprise. Radio is described here as “un hito clave en una utopía tecnocientífica en expansión donde el futuro era todo menos un espectáculo brillante iluminado con sus promesas de una vida mejor” (Guzmán and Taberner, 2016, p. 216)<sup>4</sup>. Further on, a few lines by Ramón Pérez Vilar are quoted, to whom we will pay attention at another time, in which the term “revolution” is used, highly representative of these narratives (*Radio Barcelona*, 2/27/1926, p. 8).

To identify these discourses, as well as the formats proposed for the development of educational programs, we used print media, including the magazine *Ondas*, published weekly

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<sup>2</sup> Pinochet, ‘La radiotelefonía como factor de transformación social’, *Radiosola*, 1924, mayo-junio, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Is radiotelephony a more significant invention than the printing press? The services offered by this invention in the 20th century surpass in some ways those offered by Gutenberg’s invention. What book, what magazine is read by twenty million people? A political speech [...] or a lecture can be heard by ten or twenty million people. [And] it is not even necessary for those who listen to know the alphabet. Radiotelephony is the most efficient and wonderful means for humanity to spread its ideas.

<sup>4</sup> “a key milestone in an expanding techno-scientific utopia where the future was anything but a glittering spectacle illuminated by promises of a better life” (Guzmán and Taberner, 2016, p. 216).

between 1925 and 1936 by Unión Radio, Spain's first radio network. The magazine, directed by engineer Ricardo Urgoiti Somovilla (1900-1979), aspired to be modern and attractive, highlighting the attributes of radio broadcasting in terms of communication, leisure, culture, and scientific dissemination. The publication was presented as an example of transmedia storytelling, as the Unión Radio-Ondas magazine partnership, through the combination of radio and print media, produced stories that offered the public shared content committed to the expansion of radio. In addition, spaces were created for listener participation, which contributed to the dissemination of these narrative worlds (García-Marín, 2023). The combination also reflects the radio extension project designed by Ricardo Urgoiti, which was closer to a commercial vision of the medium, but without neglecting its educational character. This vision differed from other radio projects in Spain, such as Radio Barcelona. Similarly, it contrasted with the proposal that marked the beginning of radio broadcasting in Brazil, with the creation in 1923 by Edgard Roquette-Pinto<sup>5</sup> of Radio Sociedade do Rio de Janeiro, whose statutes prohibited the broadcasting of commercial and political content.

To address the Brazilian case, we use a highly representative document in this study: the manual *Rádio e Educação*, published in 1934 by Ariosto Espinheira (1904-1961). In this work, the author addresses the role of radio broadcasting in the expansion of education and scientific dissemination in Brazil, based on the results of a report prepared by the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation (IICI). The Institute was created in 1925, in the context of the years following the First World War, as an agency linked to the League of Nations, with the aim of promoting multilateralism, overcoming exclusionary nationalism, and contributing to world peace. The IICI is considered to be a precursor to UNESCO. The report prepared by the organization presented findings related to the role of broadcasting in primary, secondary, and higher education, taking into account experiences in countries such as England, Germany, Norway, Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Mexico and Uruguay, based on responses sent by more than 35 broadcasters about their educational practices (Coelho, 2016, p. 119).

As evidence of the circulation of this information in Brazil and Spain, in November 1932, the article "La radioescuela (The Radio School)", signed by A.M.B., was published in Ondas, referring to the IICI report as an authentic practical manual for school broadcasting. The text presented the main conclusions of the document, including some formats that should be used in the preparation of programs, such as lectures interspersed with music excerpts, dramatizations for teaching history,

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<sup>5</sup> Edgard Roquette-Pinto (1884-1954) was a medical doctor and a pioneer of radio broadcasting in Brazil. He played a key role in introducing radio as an educational and cultural tool, and worked to promote wireless transmission in Brazil as an element of popular culture. Throughout his career, he stood out as an advocate for communication and scientific and cultural education. He was director of the National Museum and devoted himself to studying and promoting Brazil's cultural and scientific heritage. He conducted research on indigenous cultures, such as the Nambiquaras, and also played a prominent role in the field of public health, with the aim of improving the country's sanitary conditions. In 1927, Roquette-Pinto took up the 17th chair of the Brazilian Academy of Letters (ABL). He published important works, such as *Seixos Rolados* (1927) and *Rondônia* (1916), the latter considered a classic of anthropology. In 1933, he founded the National Institute of Educational Cinema (INCE). Roquette-Pinto also edited the magazine *Electron* (1926), which published information on the programming of Rádio Sociedade do Rio de Janeiro and articles on radio as a means of cultural dissemination, as well as technical texts related to the conditions and quality of broadcasts and receptions, and the development of technology.

and reports (A.M.B. Ondas, 11/26/1932, p. 6). These formats also appear in Espinheira's manual as programming models for teaching different subjects, in the context of the need to expand education to different regions of Brazil, for which radio was presented as a strong ally.

There are no general studies on the impact of educational radio in Spain. However, there are indirect references that suggest, based on some accounts of the use of radio in classrooms – some of which were published in Ondas – that these experiences were sporadic in the decade between 1926 and 1936. There is evidence of the government purchasing receivers for schools during the Second Republic, particularly in 1933 and 1934 (Guijarro and García-Cervigón, 2022, 211-213), and it is known that some secondary schools had these devices, although their specific use is unknown. The interview conducted in January 1936 with Prudencio del Valle, head of the School Creation Section of the Ministry of Public Instruction, does not suggest that promising results were achieved (González, 1936, 2).

In the case of Brazil, Coelho's (2016) research presents the implementation of educational radio broadcasting in the 1930s, with the creation of Rádio Club and Rádio Sociedade do Rio de Janeiro. It highlights the collective dimension of the radio pioneers, their internal disputes, their experimental nature, and their actions in defense of the popularization of education and scientific knowledge. The author devotes a chapter to these topics and analyzes four children's programs that became popular throughout the 1930's, including *Viagem através do Brasil*, presented by Ariosto Espinheira.

We maintain that, in this period of radio trials, statements that follow the pattern seen do not, according to a causal scheme, have direct effects on specific individuals and agents of the cultural industry. Rather, their relevance lies in the fact that they provide narratives that give meaning and significance to actions. The purpose of these contributions was to establish the necessary conditions for accepting and promoting cultural change linked to the use and spread of new technology. To this end, they question the routines associated with traditions and values – in short, with another culture and authority – in which innovations did not occupy a significant place. In this context, the use of the term modernity and its connotations – that is, a new attitude accompanied by a new mindset – serves to remind us of the importance of renewal. The following section presents the elements of the discourse that revolve around the construction of a radio culture as an instrument for education.

## **Radio, a metaphor for universal education**

An analysis of representative samples published in magazines, newspapers or books dedicated to dissemination adequately illustrates what has been stated so far. This is the case with a special class of magazines, those linked to radio stations, such as Ondas, Electron, Radiosola, Radio Barcelona, and Catalunya Ràdio, which have a defined purpose within business schemes. At the same time, magazines run by groups of radio amateurs were published, such as Radio Sport, where Ramón Pérez Vilar published some contributions. In another study (Alves and Guijarro, 2024), examples

were already given of authors who highlighted the relevance of radio in education and cultural dissemination. A reading of these contributions published in the magazine *Ondas* provides valuable material for detecting the resources and references used in the proposed conversion of society to radio culture. Thus, Luciano de Taxonera, Rosa Arciniega and other anonymous contributions were already mentioned. However, other authors with an openly possibilist language also participated in this discursive mission. The editorial secretary of *Ondas*, Isaac Pacheco, a telegraph operator and journalist, said in “La radio en las aldeas” (Pacheco. *Ondas*, 11/22/1925, 5):

Una organización perfecta de la obra radiodifusora, con detalles de mercados, noticias informativas, conferencias, conciertos, enseñanzas pedagógicas, es indudable que habría de reformar notablemente el nivel cultural y artístico de los hombres. Porque la radiotelefonía no es sólo distracción de gente desocupada, sino también es una escuela que partiendo de un punto llega a la tierra lejana, adonde nuestra “civilización” no ha podido llevar ni siquiera un maestro<sup>6</sup>.

The quote contains several elements typical of discourse aimed at building a culture of the emerging medium with a persuasive purpose. First, it lists the subjects covered in the communication simulation; second, it uses metaphors that evoke images familiar to readers, such as when it identifies radiotelephony with a school; third, it proposes ways to alleviate social problems, such as the possibility of having teachers in places far from the metropolis, a form of technological solutionism. A little earlier in the article, Pacheco outlined the material deployment of radio resources, a simple process that caused “esas aldeas tan apartadas de todo síntoma de civilización [percibieran] en sus rústicos espíritus las iniciaciones del arte y la pincelada de una cultura<sup>7</sup>.” All that was needed was for the city councils of major capitals to have a radio station and for rural councils to provide receivers to schools, provided that there was a minimum number of attendees.

Based on contributions made in newspapers such as *Ondas*, we can see that the discourse on radio is grouped around categories such as equity, interclassism, and universality, once it has been assumed that technology does not belong to just one social sector. Radio also promotes democratization and information integration, as it is a medium that reaches remote places, has no barriers, and can reach a very large number of receivers, that is, the mass of listeners. Added to these categories is the perspective of the civilizing mission, based on the belief that the benefits of science and technology are both material and moral. Finally, its neutrality is assumed insofar as radio, through its programming, transmits the truth.

These categories, with their evocative power, frame the statements that make up the descriptions and arguments dedicated to presenting radio as a medium, and from them derive

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<sup>6</sup> A perfectly organized radio broadcasting service, with details of markets, news, conferences, concerts, and educational programs, would undoubtedly bring about a notable improvement in the cultural and artistic level of mankind. Because radio broadcasting is not just entertainment for idle people, but also a school that starts from one point and reaches distant lands, where our “civilization” has not even been able to send a teacher.

<sup>7</sup> “those villages so far removed from any sign of civilization [to perceive] in their rustic spirits the beginnings of art and the brushstrokes of a culture”.

other orientations that explain actions, such as, within the civilizing aspect of radio, its use as an educational tool, or also its use as an instrument for promoting peace, as recognized in the statements by Díaz Fernández and others. Below, we have compiled a sample of statements that fall within the aforementioned frameworks and that extol the democratizing nature of the medium due to its contribution to education.

In 1926, businessman Nicolás Urgoiti, father of Ricardo Urgoiti, director of Unión Radio, said that radio would have little influence on educated people; however, as its reach extended to “lugares más apartados e incultos, sustituyendo el órgano del oído al de la vista, matará metafóricamente el analfabetismo y repercutirá políticamente en el dominio de una democracia más consciente<sup>8</sup>.”<sup>9</sup> In 1932, *Voz* published in its “Radiotelefonía” section that radio was democratic in two ways: because it was accessible to both the rich and the poor, since “Todos pueden oírla. A todos llega por igual”<sup>10</sup>; and because it surpassed other innovations, such as cinematography, in the dissemination of culture, as it was faster in transmitting information and had a greater reach (“¿Por qué el progreso de la radio?”, 6/27/1932, 6).

Lourenço Filho, professor and promoter of the ideas of the New School in Brazil, organizer of the pedagogical collection in which Ariosto Espinheira’s work is published, and author of the prologue, reproduces in those pages the images characteristic of the visionary perspective of information. The basic features of this position have already been outlined elsewhere (Guijarro y González de la Lastra, 2015, pp. 122-123). There, the text by H. G. Wells, entitled *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind* (1931), was quoted, in which, among other reflections, the author ventured that communication technologies would lead to the conception of the earth as a “meeting place.” In short, optimistic pronouncements about the deployment of these resources assured that by abolishing distances and bringing humans closer together, understanding would be improved and the conditions for lasting peace would be established. Filho’s words echo this discourse: “Communion means more than communication; it means, as a result, integration. Communication is a necessary condition, but it is not sufficient. It must be accompanied by a spirit of communion, which will ensure mutual understanding and harmony between individuals and between peoples” (Espinheira, 1934, 8).

The following paragraph is equally representative, because it assumes one of the concepts highlighted in the analysis: that of the instrumental conception of radio. There, Filho states: “La radio es un instrumento, no un programa<sup>11</sup>”. Therefore, to find its meaning, which it does not have

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<sup>8</sup> “the most remote and uneducated places, replacing the organ of sight with that of hearing, it will metaphorically kill illiteracy and have a political impact on the dominance of a more conscious democracy.”

<sup>9</sup> The statement was part of a consultation with various representatives of the artistic, scientific, and political elites of the time, including the Minister of Labor; the Mayor of Madrid; the President of the Council of Ministers; the professor at the Central University, Blas Cabrera; the director of the Astronomical Observatory, Antonio Vela; and the astronomer José Tinoco.

<sup>10</sup> “Everyone can hear it. It reaches everyone equally”.

<sup>11</sup> “Radio is an instrument, not a program.”

in isolation, “it must be linked to the creative and harmonizing purposes of education<sup>12</sup>”. He then states:

Esto ya lo han comprendido muchos países, que han intentado con éxito no sólo la elevación cultural y artística de sus pueblos, mediante la mejora de las radiaciones comunes, sino también la popularización científica y la comprensión de una noción de espíritu internacional, basada en el conocimiento mutuo de los valores del pensamiento y del sentimiento de las naciones (Espinheira, 1934, 8)<sup>13</sup>.

Similarly, Lourenço Filho’s preface denotes his commitment to a universal (transnational) perspective on the use of technology, as understood in many countries. It is clear that radio is therefore a material good that can be directed, without affecting discourse, toward the purposes that the elite deem appropriate for the population.

It is a constant feature of statements about radio to highlight its benefits, using the attributes associated with the categories mentioned above. In this regard, this study presents an analysis of the discourse used to disseminate educational content aimed at educating the population, especially certain audiences such as children, young people, women, and rural workers. We analyze the Spanish context through the texts of Ramón Pérez Vilar and the Brazilian context based on the book *Rádio e Educação* by engineer and professor Ariosto Espinheira.

## **The Teacher Ramón Pérez Vilar and the Cultural Project of Radio in Spain**

The civilizing or cultural discourse of radio broadcasting acquires a specific meaning when linked to other dimensions, such as the political and educational aspects of a community or a country. As evidence, we present the principles of the broadcasting station of the *Associació Nacional de Radiodifusió* in Catalonia (ANR), as well as the radio-educational project incorporated into its programming. In this endeavor, the schoolteacher Ramón Pérez Vilar stood out in particular.

In the editorials of the magazine *Catalunya Ràdio*, an organ linked to the ANR, the terms of this vision are expressed. Radio is considered an instrument of culture and, therefore, as stated, of freedom<sup>14</sup>. “Culture” here means the promotion of Catalanism, and radio is presented as “el medio más eficaz de difusión de cultura posible por la ciencia moderna”<sup>15</sup> (ANR., *Catalunya Ràdio*, 11/30/1931, 26). In this conception, radio is an instrument (a neutral material device); it is a product

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<sup>12</sup> “it must be linked to the creative and harmonizing purposes of education.”

<sup>13</sup> Many countries have already understood this and have successfully attempted not only to elevate the cultural and artistic levels of their peoples by improving common broadcasting, but also to popularize science and promote understanding of a notion of international spirit based on mutual knowledge of the values of the thoughts and feelings of nations (Espinheira, 1934, 8).

<sup>14</sup> Editorial in *Catalunya Ràdio* on December 31, 1931 (p. 4): “But we cannot consider ourselves free if, despite the freedom we have achieved, we remain slaves to a language that is not our own and to organizations that depend on forces outside our borders.”

<sup>15</sup> “the most effective means of disseminating culture possible through modern science”.

of science (an objective authority) and is considered highly effective (it has wide reach and can reach a large number of people).

Within this radio project, children's programming included educational segments, with stories, lessons on the history of Catalonia, and guidance on the proper use of the Catalan language<sup>16</sup>.

In the organization of radio courses, Pérez Vilar played a central role, as mentioned, being both a teacher and director of Radio Barcelona's educational program. Pérez Vilar was closely associated with the ANR project (*La Veu de Catalunya*, 9/23/1932, 6), which did not view radio as a commercial venture. Thus, he was one of the first people in Spain to dedicate himself to designing a radio-educational plan, which was published in the magazine *Radio Barcelona*<sup>17</sup>. He had a notable influence on Radio Barcelona's programming in 1928 and, starting in 1933, as will be seen, on the station *Radio Associació de Catalunya* (EAJ-15)<sup>18</sup>.

Among his various contributions to magazines, we highlight the following because it summarizes his views on the general use of radio. The brief article was published in the magazine *Ondas* (Pérez Vilar, *Ondas*, 2/6/1927, 9). There, he stated that a radio message should have the following qualities: a powerful voice and clear signal; it should be patriotic (meaning that it contributed to the nation's prosperity) and take religious morality into account; it should contribute to education; it should be entertaining, meaning that radio had the duty to provide amusement ("that programs are not tedious, that they distract, that they do not become cloying. And the only way to achieve this is to give them the charm of variety, constantly changing them and seasoning them with art and wit. This task of keeping the public from getting bored is not as easy as it seems"). It should also be respectful of different viewpoints and prudent; therefore, certain messages should not be broadcast.

The fact that his radio-educational project appeared in a review in the Report of the Advisory Committee on Education by Radio (Washington, 1930, 214-215), in the section dedicated to Spain, is proof of the relevance and attention his work received. The section began by quoting some words by Pérez Vilar, which summarized ideas he had published in *Radio Barcelona*:

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<sup>16</sup> This section – the Thursday program that our readers will find on the previous pages – is made up of everything you need to have a good time while educating your children. From Thursday's Story, through beautiful comic strips, jokes, children's speeches in front of the microphone, to lessons on the history of Catalonia, specially adapted to be heard and understood by children, and the entertaining and enjoyable explanation of the barbarisms we so often use in speech, indicating their substitutes in the Catalan language..." (*Catalunya Radio*, 11/30/1931, 26).

<sup>17</sup> Ramón Pérez Vilar, "Contribución al estudio de un plan Radiopedagógico I, II, III, IV, V". *Radio Barcelona*, 3/12/1927, 6-7; 10/12/1927, 5; 17/12/1927, 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> The Catalan radio station was founded in 1930, following the granting of a medium wave license (EAJ-15) to the National Broadcasting Association (1924), Spain's most important radio group, which had previously been awarded the *Radio Barcelona* license. Initially, it had a very limited broadcast range; however, from April 15, 1931, it was able to broadcast 24 hours a day. The first station was located in Barcelona, although later it would open other stations in the rest of the provinces of Catalonia (the only known history of RAC from that period is the publication by Salllas, Jose Manuel and Rafel Llena, Agustín (1980, 50 years of EAJ 15 *Radio Associació de Catalunya*. *Radio España de Barcelona*. Picazo). Although the first project was presented as a cultural radio station without advertising, from 1931 onwards, formulas were adopted to generate income through the commercialization of programs and the insertion of advertisements, initiatives that had a significant impact on the restructuring of its accounts (Balsebre, 2001, v. 1, 355).

La enseñanza por radio es de gran valor, pero es necesariamente subjetiva, por lo que no es comparable a la enseñanza objetiva. Para el maestro las ventajas de la radio educativa son las siguientes: (1) su universalidad, pues permite que instrucciones simultáneas se ofrezcan a un gran número de personas; (2) su agrado, asegurado a una cantidad innumerable de oyentes por la gran variedad del material que puede ofrecer; (3) su economía, debido a que con un simple aparato, que es fácil de conseguir, es suficiente para adquirir todas las enseñanzas que un individuo desee adquirir. Aunque los aparatos para las escuelas fueran más caros, el número de estudiantes que podrían utilizarlos de manera efectiva justificaba la compra; (4) su comodidad, dado que permite recibir instrucción sin necesidad de salir del hogar<sup>19</sup>.

In fact, the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages. Teaching by radio was presented as a resource superior to other educational systems. Pérez Vilar believed that materials intended for radio transmission to schools would form a new pedagogical system. Its effectiveness would depend on how different formats were approached in the various areas he outlined, as follows:

Educational Topics: Religious and moral lectures; explanation of the practice of piety; love of one's neighbor; humility, patience, etc.; character building and education of the will; scholastic obligations; explanation of social practices.

Instructive Topics: Artistic lectures and popular scientific talks on simple subjects; explanations of basic topics in art; design, painting, architecture, etc.; rudiments of law; attention exercises for children.

Practical Knowledge: Home economics; cooking, etc.; care of domestic animals; geometric solids; carpentry instructions for constructing objects and making repairs.

Entertainment: Forms of humor, fun, and amusement; jokes, anecdotes, etc.; juggling games, explanation of simpler forms.

Recitation: Life and customs, ancient and modern, of human beings; habits of insects, fish, birds, and reptiles; lives of famous people: authors, artists, musicians, inventors, mystics; children's monologues and dialogues in prose and verse.

Music: Phonograph and pianola records; popular songs; orchestral compositions; religious hymns for different celebrations; performances by piano, xylophone, mandolin, and violin artists.

Physical Education: Gymnastic exercises; oral hygiene; breathing; boxing; aviation.

Before this publication, Pérez Vilar was already known outside Spain. In the Italian magazine *Radorario*, a review of his work appeared, in which he was praised as follows:

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<sup>19</sup> "Teaching by radio is of great value, but it is necessarily subjective, so it is not comparable to objective teaching. For the teacher, the advantages of educational radio are as follows: (1) its universality, as it allows simultaneous instruction to be offered to a large number of people; (2) its pleasantness, ensured for an innumerable audience thanks to the great variety of material it can provide; (3) its cost-effectiveness, since with a simple device, which is easy to acquire, one can access all the lessons an individual wishes to learn. Even if the devices for schools were more expensive, the number of students who could effectively use them would justify the purchase; (4) its convenience, since it allows instruction to be received without leaving the home."

Con la competencia de un maestro y de un hombre que conoce de cerca las cosas de la Radio, esbozó un notable e interesante plan radiopedagógico para la revista Radio Barcelona. De hecho, la enseñanza por radio puede ser muy eficaz y presenta la ventaja práctica de ser transmitida por un solo profesor a un número incalculable de estudiantes, cuya atención se capta mejor con este sistema (Organo Ufficiale Dell'Ente Italiano Audizioni Radiofoniche, 18/3/1928, 7)<sup>20</sup>.

According to Roberto Baelo (2008, 144), who cites the work of Salillas and Rafel (1980), Pérez Vilar began his pedagogical program at Radio Cataluña, and in 1933 Radio Asociación de Cataluña (EAJ-15) also launched an educational program, supposedly following his guidance. Both experiences, it is claimed, failed due to a lack of technical resources.

Some details from his contributions to the magazine Catalunya Ràdio, which began publication in October 1931, nuance these observations. In November 1933, the section “Radiopedagogy” was inaugurated, in which the broadcasts included in EAJ-15’s programming were presented. It was announced that the educational broadcasts of Ràdio-Associació de Catalunya, following the teachings of Radio Barcelona that had begun on December 5, 1928, would take place every Wednesday, from four to five in the afternoon – that is, for one hour – according to the following schedule (Catalunya Ràdio, 11/4/1933, p. 25):

Opening	5 min
Educational topics	10 min
Musical interlude	5 min
Songs, children musicians, etc.	5 min
Instructive topics	10 min
Musical interlude	5 min
Choirs, recitals, etc.	5 min
Recreational topics	10 min
Closing	5 min

Moreover, in the following image one can see the program of the first broadcast of this new section.

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<sup>20</sup> With the competence of a teacher and of a man who knows the inner workings of Radio, he sketched a remarkable and interesting radio-educational plan for the magazine Radio Barcelona. In fact, teaching via radio can be very effective and has the practical advantage of being transmitted by a single teacher to an incalculable number of students, whose attention is better captured with this system” (Organo Ufficiale Dell'Ente Italiano Audizioni Radiofoniche, 3/18/1928, 7).

Figure 1: Catalunya Ràdio, No. 79 – November 4, 1933, p. 25



Archive: Arxiu de Revistes Catalanes Antiques [https://arca.bnc.cat].

In 1933, Pérez Vilar published *El triomf de la ràdio a Catalunya*, a synthesis of his ideas and visions regarding the first mass communication medium. The work does not present significantly new ideas, but it constitutes a contribution to the use of radio as an instrument for unifying mentalities around simple images and messages. In the chapter "Radio, Instrument of Government," there are statements linking this medium with the cultural project that was intended to be promoted. Thus, he affirms:

Cataluña debe serenarse y mirarse a sí misma, contemplando su bienestar y prescindiendo de todos los egoísmos, por un lado, pero dejando arrinconados también todos los intereses creados por los que miran la radiotelefonía como un elemento particularista, pues por encima de todo debe ponerse el interés espiritual y de cultura o sea el interés nacional (Pérez Vilar, 1933, 81)<sup>21</sup>.

Among other topics addressed in the work – the brain, the heart and the tongue of radio; radio and the democratic ideal; the expansion of radio in Catalonia; the organization of a station;

<sup>21</sup> Catalonia must calm down and look at itself, contemplating its well-being and setting aside all selfishness on the one hand, while also leaving aside all vested interests of those who see radiotelephony as a particularistic element, since above all spiritual and cultural interest, that is, the national interest, must prevail" (Pérez Vilar, 1933, 81).

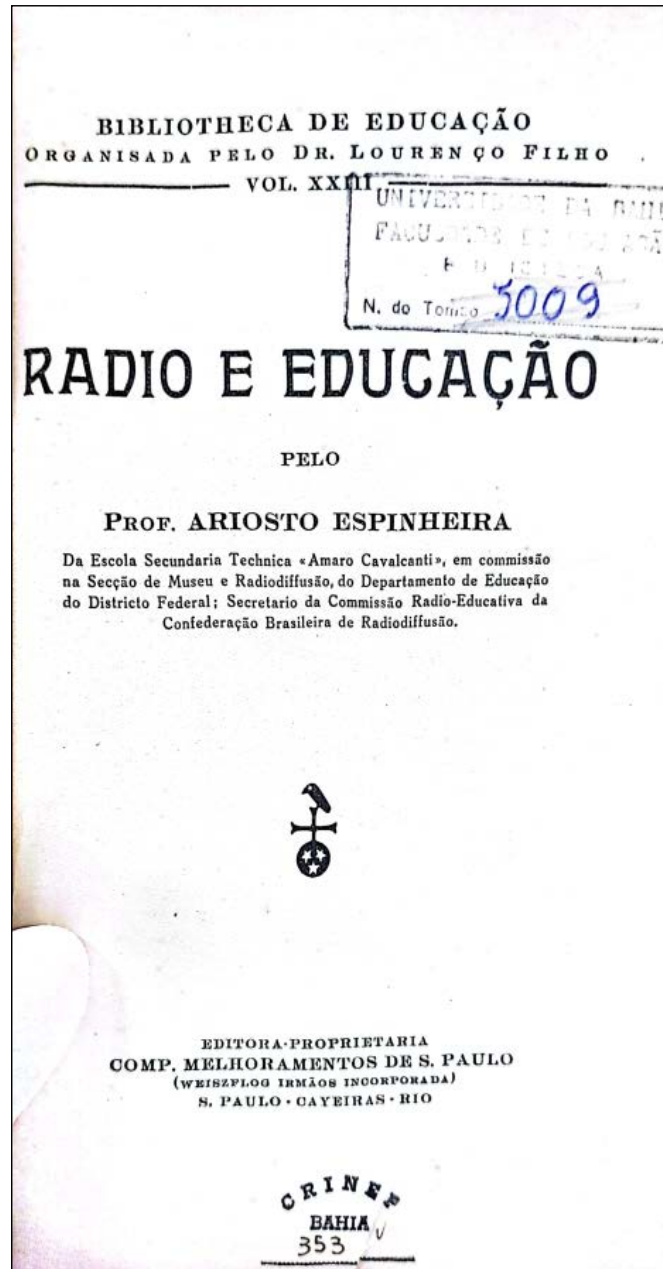
male and female announcers – one noteworthy aspect is the historical overview he provides, from the first radio-educational broadcasts of Radio Barcelona (initiated, as mentioned, in 1928), which lasted eight months, to the broadcasts of Radio Asociación de Cataluña already mentioned (active at least until 1934). From these and other passages emerges the idea that radio education, aimed primarily at boys and girls in primary school, had for teacher Pérez Vilar essentially a spiritual and ethical mission.

### **Ariosto Espinheira: Extending a Discourse on Educational Radio in Brazil**

To examine the context of Brazil and the transnational dimension of the discourse analyzed here, we have selected a highly representative work: the text by Ariosto Espinheira, *Rádio e Educação*, published in 1934 as part of the pedagogical series *Biblioteca de Educação*, organized by Lourenço Filho and aimed at disseminating the methods of the new school movement. Espinheira was an engineer by training who worked as a teacher and in institutions linked to the promotion of educational broadcasting in Brazil during the *Estado Novo* (1930–1945), a period in which he oversaw broadcasting in collaboration with the Instituto de Pesquisas Educacionais do Departamento de Educação do Distrito Federal. Ariosto was the author of instructional books and was also closely associated with Edgard Roquette-Pinto. In 1936, he was invited to present, on *Rádio Jornal do Brasil* (PRF-4), the children's program *Viagem através do Brasil*, which aired on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Sundays. In that experience, he acted as both writer and announcer of the programs, speaking to children about geography, history, and national culture. Through the analysis of his work, we can verify the extent to which the stereotypes associated with the mass use of radio were shared, and how these ideals were transferred to educational broadcasting projects inspired by contributions from progressive pedagogies.

Espinheira's text is apparently a manual intended for teachers, but it has certain distinctive features that make it a highly interesting work. It is analyzed, for example, in Patricia Coelho's (2016, 117–128) work on the history of educational radio, which provides details of the author's various proposals. Here, however, we focus on the discursive traits that assign radio a civilizing mission. The peculiarity of the text lies in its format as a manual, which sets it apart from the articles analyzed in the previous sections, thus adding content and complementary elements to the analysis. In particular, those that allow contrasts to be drawn between the rhetoric of the possibilities attributed to radio and the reality of the educational programs that were proposed.

Figure 2: Manual Rádio e Educação, 1934



**Archive:** Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos, Salvador, BA.

Espinheira's contribution is divided into different chapters that address topics ranging from the technical aspects of radio – supposedly aimed at a non-specialist audience – to an elementary history of communication, the proper programming of educational radio, and a review of radio-educational experiences in different countries. In the introduction, the author, in addition to reproducing the common discursive tropes regarding radio, resorts to one of the usual metaphors found in mass communication projects. We refer to the mention of the “popular university” (Espinheira, 1934, 13 and 76), a sort of invisible entity that provides accredited knowledge, reaching all territories without obstacles and covering a broad sector of the population, particularly those living in rural areas: “En las escuelas aisladas de entornos poblados y educados, la radio romperá este aislamiento,

permitiendo la introducción de más variedades en sus programas [...]” (Espinheira, 1934, 33)<sup>22</sup>. The term is part of the concepts analyzed in Dângelo’s (2012) study, dedicated to the radio-educational experiences of Brazil and Italy in the 1930s. In that study, the author indicates that Espinheira used it in the context of adult education and that in his manual he emphasized that the authorities should prevent the “dangers” such uses might entail. When these risks are mentioned, the intention is to underline that the applications of radio must be supervised by “competent persons” (Dângelo, 2012, 143-144). There is, therefore, a fear of the medium being appropriated by an unsuspecting mass.

The discourse of optimistic possibility<sup>23</sup> undergoes some changes, losing its evocative power, when the conditions for the implementation of programs in more specific contexts are presented. The details of these proposals are examined below.

According to Espinheira, there are two basic aims that give meaning to the educational use of radio. One is the association of these pedagogical methodologies with the ideology of progressive education (also identifiable with the principles of the new school movement). This affiliation implies that, contrary to the appearance of a student receiving information passively, radio resources allow for the creation of active listeners. Added to this premise is the explicit defense of the teacher’s role in the classroom, as it is the teacher who truly turns lessons into active practice, since radio media consist of a “método uniforme y de algún modo mecánico, que suprime con efectividad el contacto directo del personal con los alumnos” (Espinheira, 1934, 32)<sup>24</sup>. In fact, the proposals include close collaboration with teachers, careful preparation of “talks” so that they function as real lessons, as well as the importance of teaching through play, in an engaging and entertaining way. For these purposes, seven types of radio programs are proposed: the ordinary lesson, the lecture, the dialogue, the dramatization, the narrative or story, the report, and the educational bulletin (Espinheira, 1934, 35-40).

Espinheira (1934, 36-45) presents a detailed list of the different communicative forms made possible by radio. This versatility conveys the image of a flexible medium that can adapt its discourse to the subjects covered and to its audiences. The lecture is more suitable for the adult listener, though it must be delivered slowly and in simple sentences; the talk is more informal, and the story and dramatization are appropriate for younger or juvenile listeners. In these cases, the goal is to stimulate imagination and creativity.

For the teaching of natural sciences in primary school, Espinheira suggested the format of lectures on scientific notions with practical applications, indicating that: “[...] deberían tender a interesar los niños llevándolos al estudio personal de los fenómenos naturales, haciéndoles

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<sup>22</sup> “In the isolated schools of populated and educated environments, radio will break this isolation, allowing for greater variety in their programs [...]” (Espinheira, 1934, 33).

<sup>23</sup> Bertolt Brecht, in his writings on radio, criticizes “technological possibilism,” stating that “bourgeois piety” overestimates all systems that offer “possibilities,” without anyone worrying about the actual results; see Brecht, Bertolt (2000). *Brecht on Film and Radio*, London, Marc Silberman, 41-46.

<sup>24</sup> “uniform and somewhat mechanical method, which effectively suppresses the direct contact of staff with students”.

observarlos por sí mismos” (1934, 54)<sup>25</sup>. For the teaching of geography, the author relied on travel narratives: “Tras las experiencias vividas en Inglaterra, la radiodifusión al servicio de la geografía se puede resumir en narrativas de viajes. Impartirán conferencias ponentes que han participado en estos viajes; [...] describiendo costumbres y hábitos de diferentes pueblos” (1934, 54)<sup>26</sup>.

Everything presented here – both regarding the subjects suitable for radio use and the programs and the ways of using the medium – emphasizes the limitations of radio and, consequently, highlights the predominant role of the teacher in directing and guiding its use, as demonstrated in the following points (Espinheira, 1934, 34-77): radio should not be used for content already available in books; as it is an auditory resource, students must be encouraged to maintain attention to the information broadcast; the aim is to create habits, not to define notions to be memorized. Thus, in the teaching of geography, it is preferable to focus lessons on highlighting the influence of humans on the Earth and of the Earth on humans, rather than requiring the memorization of a list of mountains and rivers. One of the challenges mentioned concerns the teaching of Mathematics and physical-natural sciences. In the first case, instruction is limited to very elementary notions, in which students should follow the audio with the use of sticks and pieces of paper, for example. In the second case, given the highly visual and experimental component of these subjects, the task becomes very complicated. Nonetheless, it is important to mention practical applications and to recommend that students have some of the described objects at hand. For the proper implementation of programs, first, broadcasts should last around 15 minutes and never exceed 30 minutes; second, teachers should be trained in broadcasting techniques; third, there should be close collaboration between radio speakers and teachers; and fourth, broadcasts should be complemented by visual elements.

## Conclusions

The review of the sources mentioned here has made it possible to verify the existence of analogies in the discourses and in the instrumental conception of radio, both in the contributions made in Spain by individuals publishing in journals linked to broadcasting stations and in those of Brazilian officials committed to promoting educational radio. In certain contexts, such as the promotion of a Catalanist radio or in the historical moment examined in Brazilian reality, there is also an evident political interest in controlling the medium and educational content, with the aim of directing them toward identity-building or centralizing objectives (Coelho, 2016, 130-136).

The differences depended on how these discourses were received in both countries, according to their respective political contexts. In this regard, in Spain, this debate around the use of radio took place during the Second Republic, highlighting the idea of radio as a disseminator of both universal

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<sup>25</sup> “[...] they should aim to interest children by leading them toward the personal study of natural phenomena, making them observe them for themselves” (1934, 54).

<sup>26</sup> “After the experiences in England, broadcasting in the service of geography can be summarized in travel narratives. The speakers who have participated in these trips will give lectures; [...] describing the customs and habits of different peoples”.

and regional culture; a driver of a modernization project that included the expansion of educational offerings, rural development (based on the modernization of agriculture), and the dissemination of scientific knowledge aimed at social improvement, supported by the idea of technological neutrality. In Brazil, these same ideas circulated, but in dialogue with a development project linked to the Estado Novo, in which the perspective prevailed that radio should function as an instrument to contribute to the formation of a national identity and the strengthening of the State, rooted in a nationalist ideal closer to the model of Italian fascism. In other words, the discursive elements mentioned left room for radio practices in the political sphere to be directed or interpreted in different ways.

To meet the high expectations associated with radio, as noted in Espinheira's work (1934), it was necessary to fulfill other fundamental requirements, in addition to those already mentioned: the creation of centers dedicated to producing educational programs and the acquisition of good receivers. Although some evidence points to the existence of daily broadcasts<sup>27</sup> for schools in countries such as England, Germany, Belgium, and the United States – considered references for radio education projects and also cited in the reviews on these topics published in Spain<sup>28</sup> – the use of radio in formal education was not representative.

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<sup>27</sup> Let us recall, among others, Margarita Comas' article, "La radio en la escuela" (*Ondas*, January 18, 1930, 5). Here, she also comments on the replacement of teachers by radio: "Radio teaching does not, of course, seek to replace the direct action of the teacher in schools, but there is no doubt that many of the difficulties encountered, especially in rural districts, could be solved in this way."

<sup>28</sup> These are the cases that receive preferential attention in the section of Espinheira's book, "Exemplos da actividade educativa das estações transmissoras" (1934, 82 ff.). Spain is briefly mentioned, limited to the discontinuous experiences of Radio Asociación de Cataluña.

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