# Sound fiction and verbodependent creativity. Sound short stories without words

## Ficción sonora y creatividad verbodependiente. Microrrelatos sonoros sin palabras

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**ABSTRACT**
**Introduction:** the rise of current sound fiction requires, from Communication studies, attention that verifies the abilities of students in fictional sound creation for their future work. The dependency on the visual image and the word that the young generations have, requires, in turn, an empirical verification. **Methodology:** the experience that is now presented carries out an action of writing sound fiction micro-stories, designed to detect the difficulties encountered by the students when putting into practice all the sound elements with the absence of the word, incorporating it after gradually in different phases of script writing. The guided writing work is completed with a double movement: one analytical on

the scripts made and another based on the surveys completed by the authors on the complexity of this task of scriptwriting. **Results:** the micro-stories generated had a total lack of non-verbal sound resources, without exploitation of other elements of sound language. **Discussion:** the results confirm a "functional deafness" that leads to a failure to build fictional sound stories, beyond the design of soundscapes. **Conclusions:** the analysis of the creations points to the existence of a variation in the cognitive narrative of the new and future generations of creators and listeners regarding sound.

**Keywords:** Sound fiction; Soundtrack; Cognitive narrative; Short story; Podcasting; Higher level education; Sound skills.

## RESUMEN
**Introducción:** el auge de la ficción sonora actual exige de los estudios en Comunicación una atención que compruebe las capacidades de los estudiantes en creación sonora ficcional para su futuro laboral. La dependencia de la imagen visual y la palabra que las jóvenes generaciones poseen exige, a su vez, una comprobación empírica. **Metodología:** la experiencia que ahora se presenta lleva a cabo una acción de escritura de microrrelatos de ficción sonora, diseñada para detectar las dificultades encontradas por las y los estudiantes al poner en práctica todos los elementos sonoros con ausencia del de palabra, para luego incorporarla progresivamente en distintas fases de escritura de guion. El trabajo de escritura guiada se completa con un doble movimiento: uno analítico sobre los guiones realizados y otro basado en las encuestas cumplimentadas por los autores y autoras sobre la complejidad de esta tarea de guionización. **Resultados:** los microrrelatos generados contaron con una carencia casi total de recursos sonoros no verbales, sin explotación de otros elementos del lenguaje sonoro. **Discusión:** los resultados confirman una "sordera funcional" que deriva en una falla para construir relatos sonoros de ficción, más allá del diseño de paisajes sonoros. **Conclusiones:** el análisis de las creaciones apunta a la existencia de una variación en la narrativa cognitiva de las nuevas y futuras generaciones de creadores y de oyentes en lo que a sonido respecta.

**Palabras clave:** Ficción sonora; Guion sonoro; Narrativa cognitiva; Microrrelato; *Podcasting*; Enseñanza superior; Competencias sonoras.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Starting context

Does fiction without words exist? It does exist: pantomime, photography, silent films, shadow theater... Any medium or mode of representation that is constituted with audiovisual or only visual codes can construct, with greater or lesser difficulty, fiction without words. However, is there such a thing as sound fiction without words? Very few, but it does exist. If we talk about sound universes, there are four elements and codes that are put into action to generate sound-spheres: words, effects, music, and silence. If we talk about sound fiction without words, we are talking about the construction of a fictional world only with effects, music, and silence, which is highly complex to interpret for the listener and to construct for the creator. There are not many cases of sound fiction without words, precisely because of the difficulty involved in the construction and synthesis of the soundscape beyond the conformation of the space where the characters live (characters that dialogue, describe, and narrate, bearing the weight of the story in their words), becoming also a landscape of actions and not only of situations. On the contrary, the effectiveness of these sound fictions on listeners is much higher, because, as they are not common, they need to make a receiving effort for a good understanding of the fictional story proposed to them. The scarce existing production is linked to sound experimentation, more than to

commercial production, such as sound street art experiences, some advertising spots for radio, and even in experimental cinema, always linked more to artists (such as Magz Hall, for example), than to radio broadcasters or podcasters, with exceptions such as those of Chuse Fernández (TEA FM, Zaragoza, Spain).

In recent studies on sound, beyond the already existing radio studies in Anthropology, now also in Audiovisual Communication, there are very diverse research interests, from sound memory and collective identity, to sound in public spaces, artistic sound experimentation itself, acoustic gentrification, audience loyalty, etc. Indeed, Sound Studies exceed the focus of the radio because there is already a lot of sound production outside the radio. The journal of the radio section of ECREA (European Communication Research and Education Association) has devoted a monograph to the importance of listening in the screen era, under the slogan "Listen, Watch, Share. The role of listening in a screen-based mediascape" (Radio, Sound & Society Journal, 2016). And in the CFP (2017) of that monograph, they wonder how much sound is involved in the more than 150 times throughout the day that we read or forward messages, videos, and memes across our multiple screens.

In this focus of interest, two other elements linked to this research intersect: the rise of the microform and that of sound fiction (Rodero, 2018). Given the media convergence, cyberculture and multimedia narrative have generated the era of the short format, sponsored by social networks ( such as TikTok, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram) or video (YouTube, Brightcove, Dailymotion, Livevideo, Revver, Vimeo) and audio platforms (iVoox, Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Audible, Cuonda), and has led to the proliferation of fictional, professional, or, above all, amateur products produced by prosumers of video and audio, from nano to micro-film. The DIY (Do It Yourself) culture and the large number of tutorials available on the web make it possible for prosumers to generate short stories in profusion. In parallel, the boom in the last ten years of audio fiction in podcast and audiobook format (Magadán-Díaz and Rivas-García, 2020) has led to a large number of amateur podcasts on a wide variety of topics, formats, and genres. From educational or informative podcasts to audiobooks, the podcasting universe has spread as a transmedia narrative in digital press, for example, besides the essential voice messages in social networks, social audio, audio business, and sound streaming platforms, the importance of voice in new smart home technologies, story-listening, storytelling, and even congresses that request their abstracts in podcast format.

In summary, the short podcast as a new communication format for fiction or non-fiction stories is an instrument of a generation known as millennials (Perona-Páez et al., 2014; García-Jiménez et al., 2018; Pedrero-Esteban et al., 2019a; Barrios-Rubio, 2021), which has spread to other generations and population groups due to its portability, ductility, and brevity of consumption, as well as an auxiliary element of support for people with functional visual diversity. It is no coincidence that monographs are being produced in scientific journals dedicated to new forms of listening, undoubtedly linked to the younger generations (Ravera, 2019). However, does this new way of consuming sound fiction correspond to a capacity of understanding, both of listeners and creators, and exploitation of all sound resources? The reality indicates that a lot of amateur fiction is produced in short audiovisual format, in memes or micro-videos (gags and humorous monologues above all), but there is very little production of microform sound fiction (Guarinos, 2011) on platforms such as iVoox, Pocket Casts, Google Podcasts, Spotify, or Cuonda, compared to the boom of young listeners on professional sound platforms, such as Podium Podcasts (Antunes and Salaverría, 2018). The little that is found is basically reduced to the use of the word without exploiting the available sound elements, an issue that also happens in audiovisual nano and micro-narratives where the visualization of the amateur actor/actress/performer does not work or exploit the possibilities provided by the audiovisual language, as happens in TikTok productions. What difficulties does sound narration pose for young people who, however, show fluency in the creation of fictional narrative audiovisual microforms? The Narrativa Radial school (Argentina),

one of the leading schools in the Spanish-speaking world in sound fiction training, advocates the activation of listening to be able to tell. They state that it is necessary to "establish an attentive, critical, and polymorphic listening to develop criteria that incorporate sound from the gestation of the story, to be applied to different genres, formats, and supports (audiovisual, radio, multimedia, theatrical, performative...)" (Narrativa Radial, 2021). And it is not only from the point of view of professionals from where this call for training on sound is made but also from the Academy a necessary and urgent sound literacy is claimed (Pedrero-Esteban et al., 2019b).

## 1.2. Short fiction, sound, and cognitive narrative

In the current research trends in sound studies, fiction, supported until recently by few scientists, has been expanded by the even increase of productions, of objects to study. Sound fiction in Spanish research was not treated as a preferred topic until 2013, when it constituted part of 20% of other genres (Piñeiro, 2017), becoming its own section in 2019 after the beginning of the golden age of podcasts (Guarinos, 2019), which has already managed to shape itself as an object of study by becoming the new mass digital media (Kischinhevsky et al., 2020; Bonini, 2020). The increase in listening does not leave the academic scientific community indifferent, even less so if we can deal not only with a social but also an educational situation, the one related to the possible future creators of sound stories and current university students.

Within the framework of Sound Studies, this work is ascribed to the study of the storytelling of sound fiction in podcast format. Of all the perspectives from which audio can be researched -acoustic, real sounds, in its relation to the arts, to cultures, to playability, etc. (Mieszkowski, 2021)-, given the nature of fiction scriptwriting, there is a fundamental one: that of the phonotext (Stewart, 1990) and of a phonotext in particular, that of short duration. Although the concept of phonotext itself is studied and applied in literary studies, referring to all sound content or evocative of sound in written works, it is a fact that from the audiovisual narrative, it is a necessary perspective to consider beyond the word itself, since the script, no matter how sonorous the final product may be, begins with words. The sound script, moreover, must contain a high-powered phonotext with a view to the subsequent work produced. The starting point is words to capture ideas and then turn them into sound, in all kinds of sound: human and non-human, natural or artificial, of machines and objects, articulated or not, musical or not, rhythmic or not, word or non-word (and of non-sound: silence).

This is intimately linked to sound information design, which is known as "sonification" (Faste and Faste, 2012; Chalkho, 2014), understood as an "auditory display technique in which data is mapped to non-speech sound for the purpose of representation or communication" (Roddy and Bridges, 2022), to describe the knowledge process that is set in motion in the act of sound design, which is complex since, while the visual design is made for direct and efficient understanding, sound design takes into account other variables. The fullness of all this can even go as far as using sounds as complex sound metaphors (Adlington, 2003), beyond the very functions of the radiosemes traditionally worked from classical radio studies (Balsebre, 1994; Guarinos, 1999, Rodero and Soengas, 2010).

Very few works delve into the confluence of sound and short fiction together, as is the case of the monograph of the journal Short Fiction In Theory and Practice, under the slogan "More than Meets the Ear: Sound and Short Fiction", which reflects on short sound forms. But many reference works work on microforms, from the short story to the short, micro, or nano-film, their complexity, condensation of resources, and diegetic fragmentariness as core elements (Zavala, 2008). The economy of narrative construction, following Álamo-Felices, establishes a technical narrative design based on the following five items: singularized action and diegetic nuclearity, condensed and cyclical narrative time, reduction of the category of the character in the action and characterization, use of the narrative mode to the

detriment of the deceleration of pauses, descriptions, or dialogues and, finally, the reduction of spatial design (2010, p. 186). We should also add the absence of secondary plots, the models of a plausible fictional world, the diegetic composition in media res or at the end, and an enunciation tending towards telling (Guarinos, 2009).

However, there are only four types of signs involved in a sound product: words, effects, music, and silence. The functions traditionally attributed to them should be condensed, and exploited to the maximum in sound microfiction. Of the four, words are undoubtedly the one that accumulates more functions for their semantic possibilities, besides sound, their acoustic, support that gives it body, the voice, its colors, modulations, intentionalities, rhetoric, and oratory. The word is action in sound fiction, says Melgosa, but he also stresses that this is achieved not only by its semantic content, "but also by the acting and speech techniques" (2011, p. 402), that is, by their sound, at the same level as effects or music. Although, within the functions of sound (effects) in audiovisual production (informative, aesthetic, expressive, orthographic, environmental, and documentary), there is also the narrative function, about which Julia González-Conde indicates that "it can replace the word, evoking a situation, an event, a person, or a place... since there are sounds that could not be explained or reproduced through words. They are those that represent emotions, feelings, etc." (2017, p. 70). From both reflections, it can be deduced that nonverbal human sound is comparable in functions to non-human sounds when narrating, which is an advantage at the moment of the sound design of a short format due to the condensation that its uses would entail. The construction of the sound space, in most audible fiction, does not fall on the responsibility of the word, quite the contrary, it is the effects and the sound planes on which they delimit and build an ideoscene in the listener, as field research on the act of listening and sound spatial interpretation has shown, thus being the conclusions derived from Barrios and Ruiz (2014), Cárdenas-Soler and Martínez-Chaparro (2015), and Romero (2017). But beyond the physical landscape, the soundscape as an anthropological concept, seen from semiotics by Woodside (2008), constitutes a set of sounds in which we humans grow up, shaped by social, cultural, and ideological meanings through which personalities and belonging to a community are gestated. "These own sounds are closely related to the collective memory of communities" (Cárdenas-Soler and Martínez-Chaparro, 2015, p.131).

In short, we are talking about nonverbal communication. Within it appears a whole visual repertoire of nonverbal kinesic signs (gestures, manners, postures), cultural signs (proxemic and chronemic), but also paralinguistic nonverbal signs (phonic qualities, physiological and emotional sounds, silences, and quasi-lexical elements - non-lexical interjections or sounds whose action count with a verbal term, such as squeaking, snoring, moaning, snorting-) (Cestero, 2017). In the same way that 65% of face-to-face communication is nonverbal body communication (Díez-Maglioni and Ochoa-Galeano, 2017, p.15), paralinguistic behavior has also shown that in a high percentage of direct communication, it is more important the management of volume, rhythm, diction, accent, pauses, yawns, sighs, and interjections, than the actual contents of what is communicated (Rulicki and Cherny, 2012). This part of the studies of nonverbal communication is small, but it is of crucial importance in nonverbal and nonvisual communication, i.e., exclusively sonorous.

In this last sense, for the present research the ascription to recent theories on "embodied cognition" (Varela et al., 1991), as a step derived from the mental shaping of the cognitive narrative has been fundamental, sharing the idea that "when the terms embodiment and embodied cognition appear in relation to sound, there is sometimes an implicit assumption that for a sound to be embodied, it must somehow relate directly to some physical gesture, pattern of movement, or phenomenological observation" (Roddy and Bridges, 2022).

This embodiment by the creators of sound universes will depend, if we follow the assumptions of cognitive narrative, on the subject's previous mental structures, which in turn depend on previous experiences of reception and their consequent narrative integration, as has been demonstrated in

neuroscientific experimentation (Duero, 2019; Taisuke, 2019; Song et al., 2021). Narrative competencies start to develop from the age of 4-5 years and become complex until narrative cohesion is reached around the age of 11, considering words as a narrative-building element. Narrative comprehension is based on constructed and stored events "that are organized in knowledge structures possible to be anticipated by the audience" (Cautín-Epifani, 2013, p. 272) or mental schemes (story schemas), but that, according to the latest research, "it is no longer a structural representation that guides comprehension but a semantic level representation" (Cautín-Epifani, 2013, p. 276), a story schema is not activated but a sum of situational relationships, so that the basis of construction and comprehension of stories is based on situation models. In this sense, the "semantic summary" of a situation may not contain sound information if it is not sufficiently important for the formation of meaning, which would eliminate all dispensable sound information. In an era in which the visual and the verbal are proving to be much more powerful, the place of sound in these basic situational schemes is becoming very small in the younger generations.

Some teaching experiences have already highlighted the need for re-education on sound from areas of knowledge other than audiovisual communication, such as the implementation that combines architecture and radio for a better understanding of the creation of space and atmosphere in future architects (Karathanasopoulou, 2019). This research submitted in the same line aims to evidence the urgent need for sound re-education, at least in students of Audiovisual Communication, future creators of sound content.

## 2.    Objectives

Teaching experience in scriptwriting, radio narrative, and in the direction of sound fiction programs in podcast format with students of Audiovisual Communication indicates that there is a difficulty for creators when using sound effects and silence, as well as music beyond the environmental function. Sound script writing has an overabundance of words used for any necessary function: actions, situations, and construction of characters or time arcs, places, and environments... From this observation, the starting hypothesis is that young Communication students suffer from sound thinking due to hypertrophy of the use of words. The objective of the research is to design a creative action that forces the student to create a script in a brief format without the use of words to force their reflection on the possibilities of the rest of the sonorous elements involved in this type of discourse and, thus

O1.  Empirically contrast how and why such creative difficulties occur.

O2.  Verify if the non-contemplation of non-verbal sound resources can constitute a learning problem or a cognitive consequence on the sense of hearing, derived from the current modes, means, and processes of communication and media consumption, propitiated by the multi-screen era and the 3.0 environment.

It is a research that is ascribed as an experience to the concept of inter-methodology, based on actions and questionnaires (Hergueta, 2015), understood as a

globalizing practice of diverse activities, summative and expanding the process itself in which the competency dimensions of analysis-synthesis-reflection-action, which are taken up and recovered again and again, alternately depending on the type of technique that in each case is programmed and proposed to the students or that arises from it (Marta-Lazo & Gabelas-Barroso, 2013).

Besides this methodological approach, for the design of the template for the analysis of the scripts, the narrative categories of Casetti and Chio (1991), and the more specific ones of the uses of sound

resources of Rodero and Soengas (2010), of the effects of Arias (2019), the silence of Rodríguez-Bravo (2021), and the music of Aragón (2017) have been used as a starting point.

## 3. Methodology

This research has been developed during 6 consecutive years (2016-2021) in such a way that the sample of texts and creative individuals was sufficiently broad and allowed a diachronic evolutionary contrast since the participants were in a training stage and the learning processes could imply a change in the progress of competences and sound creative skills. The sustainability over time provided the necessary reliability. It was carried out in 5 waves of sample capture: students in 3rd year of Audiovisual Communication and the Official Master's Degree in Scriptwriting and Creative Narrative (both studies of the Faculty of Communication of the Universidad de Sevilla) (2016, 2019, 2021); students of the International Workshop on Voiceover and Dubbing (Universidad de Málaga, Faculty of Communication Sciences, 2017), and Students of the I Seminar on Fictional Radio (Faculty of Documentation and Communication Sciences of the Universidad de Extremadura, 2018). In total, 820 proposals for participation were made, of which only 128 were delivered. Of these, 32 misinterpreted instructions (written and oral) and delivered sound transcriptions of pre-existing audiovisual stories from which they removed the words. Thus, the actual corpus is reduced to 96 scripts, of which 17 were unsuitable because they did not contain a sonorous nature in their writing, being, therefore, only 79 scripts produced and analyzed. Of the 79 scripts, only 7 contained sufficient sound narrative quality to be produced, soundtracked, and broadcast by RadiUS, the radio of the Universidad de Sevilla, in the program Ficción Lab[1], in a specific series entitled Sin palabras (Without Words). This means that 9.63% of the initial intended corpus was successfully materialized.

The individual creators of the sample were between 19-21 years old, in the middle of their university studies in Audiovisual Communication at the undergraduate or postgraduate level, and worked individually. The action had the following steps:

- Delivery of instructions and a sound script template (Annex 1), oral explanation of the exercise, and the listening and analysis of an example of a short story without words.

- Phase 1. Creation of sound micro-story scripts (4-7').

- Phase 2. Rewriting another author's script by adding an audio description.

- Phase 3. A third version of the script by another author with full dramatization, replacing the audio description with dialogues of characters and (or not) the narrator.

- Completion of questionnaires as authors, adapters, and listeners (Annexes 2, 3, and 4).

- Selection and audio description of the best scripts.

- Completion of questionnaires as listeners to the authors and adapters themselves.

Once the different waves of actions were completed, the scripts were analyzed from the narrative point of view, using a comprehensive template for the use of narrative categories and sound and non-sound resources (Annex 5), and, finally, the interpretation of data from the questionnaires of creators, adapters, and listeners.

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[1] Available at: https://radio.us.es/programa/ficcion-lab/

## 4. Results

### 4.1. General procedural results

In general terms, the following collateral results can be established:

a) The number of people (students and teachers) who refuse to take part in the action is very high. The main reason for non-participation was the complexity of the proposal due to not being able to use words in the script.

b) Some individuals misunderstood the instructions, despite having heard the model sound example. Some participants ended up writing a script with absent or very few sonority characteristics.

c) Within the relatively small number of completed scripts (compared to the high number of proposals made), the number of acceptable, broadcast-quality works to be produced and broadcast is minimal.

d) There are no constructive differences in the results of scripts between undergraduate Communication students (supposedly trained in script techniques and sound) compared to Journalism and Advertising students (who have not worked with these elements), nor with postgraduate students (with more diverse backgrounds, even from Social Sciences or Humanities degrees and bachelor's degrees).

e) The partial results of the first wave were the same as the general results of subsequent waves.

### 4.2. Results of the textual analysis

In general terms, the comparative analysis of the synopses of each script with its corresponding sonorization shows a high degree of discordance (80%) between what was intended to be told (according to the synopsis) and the final result of the story told with non-verbal sound resources available for sound fiction, resulting in a message different from the intended one due to the lack of use of sound codes and silence.

Following the blocks of the textual analysis template the results indicate that:

a) In terms of genres, no participant chose to write comedy. The genres chosen were thriller and melodrama (residually).

b) The narrative structure is simple, without multiple diegetic compositions or complete plot arcs. The narrative techniques developed are those of in media res or ending, directly situated in the denouement.

c) The enunciation is mostly based on fixed internal or external focalization, in a 20/80 ratio, without considering omniscient focalization. The second version, audio-written, constructs omniscient narrators who are not very involved, with a distant, non-emotional interpretation. The third version of the script, the dramatized version, also uses narrators systematically, whether internal or external. The presence of implied omniscient narrators and homo-intradiegetic narrators appears.

d) The time construction is linear and progressive, with scene time or real-time, with only 2% of the construction having temporal jumps of analepsis or prolepsis. There is no temporal

simultaneity or parallel plots. In terms of duration, there is no temporal dilation or contraction in 98%, neither from the strictly narrative nor from the technical point of view (with slowing down or speeding up of sound, for example). No frequency fires or temporal ellipses are contemplated. As there is no passage of time, neither effects nor music nor silence is used as chronotopic markers.

e) The spatial design is the most complete and widely used. For the conformation of the ideoscene, effects that furnish the places and help to shape spatial coordinates are used 100%, but not music (whose geographical location value, for example, has not been taken into account). Technical effects (echo, reverberation) are used to denote amplitude or spatial emptiness. The use of different sound planes is also used in the background and foreground to denote the proximity or closeness of the sources of emission of the effect. In any case, the use of effects is few, which makes the places of action poor. The spaces are unique or fluid (spaces traversed in tracking shots following the steps of a character).

f) Characters move in a number between 1 and 3, the majority being 1-2 (90%), both protagonists, a basic nucleus between whom the conflict and the resolution are generated, by violent action (murders, shoot-ings, assaults, robberies, rapes...). We also resort to the use of environment-characters, that is, masses of characters that sound in the background (people in the street, demonstrations, people fleeing, troops attacking...). The deduced ages of the characters are around their thirties and forties. Male and female characters are combined in a balanced way. Their actions are physical and remain in the territory of stereotypes and basic subject-object actants. The effects used to characterize them are mainly those of footsteps, screams, or moans, sobs, and laughter, as well as everyday actions such as stirring coffee with a spoon, washing kitchen utensils, and making or receiving cell phone calls...

g) Actions are 100% human, with little representation of events (such as rain, wind, lightning) or animals (roaring, birdsong, crickets, for example). These suggested actions are transitive, those done by one character that affects another, and are individual, 99%. They are all active and not passive (as could be sleeping, reading, or listening to music...).

As for the sound components,

a) Effects are the most used, but those selected are also the most basic and traditional in sound fiction. They are diegetic effects (only 1% of extradiegetic effects) that evoke actions of the characters, generally natural and realistic and without metaphorical construction or sense. The main function of the effects is environmental-descriptive (100%), rarely expressive (2%), and there are no effects with ornamental or narrative functions. One of the preferred sounds are cell phone ringtones or instant messaging sounds, WhatsApp especially, besides other effects related to new technologies (computers, consoles), while the sounds of everyday life go unnoticed (as happens with the absence of human noises). They are always kept in the background, with appropriate durations for the actions the intend to convey.

b) Music is always extradiegetic, except in 2% of scripts, where it is integrated into the story. It fulfills the expressive and syntactic functions. And there is no trace of referential, narrative, or descriptive functions. They are compositions without lyrics, selected with little originality, and of styles identical to those used in cinematographic or serialized fiction music.

c)    Silence does not exist, it is only used as relative silence due to the progressive absence of sound elements, as a syntactic function without dramatic or reflexive pretensions.

d)    The dialogues in version 3 are explanatory, excessively descriptive, unnatural, and in many cases narrative when the figure of the narrator has not been used.

e)    The narrators (in versions 2 and 3) describe excessively as their only function, providing all the spatial, temporal, action, and character description information, regardless of whether they are external, internal, or omniscient narrators.

### 4.3.   Results of the creative process

The questionnaires of the participants in their role as creators unanimously indicated that they had no difficulty in working with short format. On the contrary, at a level of difficulty of 10, all participants gave a score of 8-9 to the complexity of working only with sounds and no words. Similarly, 100% of the surveys showed that the easiest to use were sound effects and the most difficult were silence and the expression of temporal change. The average number of versions of personal work before considering the first scripts finished was 6, while there were 2 for the audio-described versions and 3 for the dramatized version with or without a narrator. The average number of stories discarded by the authors themselves, before writing, due to the type of format required, was 3. No respondent acknowledged having considered using animals or non-human characters in their stories. The use of sounds of human actions, which in other audiovisual fiction stories are of common occurrence (urination, sexual panting, sucking, belching...), were silenced, while screams, cries, and laughter are frequently used. The justification given by 80% of the respondents was linked to the greater scatological effect of these sounds when they are not accompanied by images, as they are highlighted, and, according to their criteria, are obscener. The same questionnaire showed that in 20% of the cases the students "cheated" the writing by resorting to the reverse order: writing a script with dialogue and then eliminating it and replacing what was said and done by the characters with sound effects.

The questionnaire as adapters of other students' wordless plays indicated that 90% of the adapters found no relationship between the synopsis and the sound script they were to adapt. Those rated as unadaptable by the adapters were based on character memories or thoughts (Alzheimer's disease process, for example) or on actions with little or no sonorization capability (such as being infatuated with having a pair of jeans). The rest were adapted and soundtracked normally. All adapters respected the effects and music of the original script and only 20% added new effects. None corrected the absence of silence. 100% of the surveys indicated that the only essential element for the adaptation was the word. 80% eliminated the audio description narrators for the dramatized versions, replacing them with other, less distant, less cold narrators. The easiest part of the adaptation task was to introduce the narrator in both versions 2 and 3, and the most difficult part was to balance the narrative information between the narrator and characters in version 3.

The main result of the participants' own role as listeners is that 90% of the initial authors did not recognize themselves as authors of these micro-stories once they had been recorded and edited. They showed great difficulty in interpreting the versions without words, declaring to be lost in the spaces and actions and with little capacity to imagine characters until the arrival of the audio-described version 2. It is in the dramatized version 3 in which, as listeners, they feel more comfortable and come to understand the story, which 70% turned out to be very different from what they had imagined when they heard version 1 without words, being very similar or almost the same between version 2 and 3, but preferring version 3 with narrator and characters as a complete story to be heard. In version 1 without words, no respondent identified the synopsis with what they had heard. They detected characters and

spaces but without being able to imagine more than dimly the characters and the spaces. The same is true for actions, which they say are not well defined by sounds alone. There is unanimity in the need for a narrator and characters and discomfort as listeners with version 1 without words. The levels of difficulty in understanding the story of the three versions corresponded to 8-0-0 out of 10, respectively.

All participants were consumers of podcasts, but only 1% were consumers of fiction podcasts. After the experience, some participants (10%) recognized that the wordless version 1 could be much more comprehensible and stimulating if they reformulated the initial sound planning, making full use of the functions of music, silence, and all those non-daily or non-realistic effects that were not employed at the time. Other authors (20%), on the contrary, believed that it did not make sense to use only effects, music, and silence since the word is such a complete sonorous element.

## 5.  Discussion and conclusions

The following conclusions by category are drawn from the results obtained.

a.  From the procedural point of view and as a general conclusion, the didactic action by itself is not approachable for a large majority due to the difficulties of working only with nonverbal sound, not because of the short format, which is logical. It is common among young people, students or non-students, of all ages as consumers and also as prosumers, to consume or produce memes, gags, nano, and fictional micro-films, even monologues, which in itself is a story but only a verbal story.

b.  From the textual analysis, the fictional genre conditions, since genres of cinematographic origin containing a lot of actions that provoke noises are chosen. Narrative structures are reduced to a minimum, both in diegetic and temporal composition. Focalization does not become complete until the audio description narrator is included, which is then maintained in combination with dialogue in the full version. The characters are schematic and stereotypical and only the spatial design is complete and well-defined. The sound components used are basic (explosions, gunshots), with high use of technological effects typical of the students' environment. On the contrary, they include in the plot and the script sounds of referents that completely lack phonicity (such as eating bread: the sound of eating bread is exactly the same as eating a sponge cake, what is eaten is not relevant, but the act of eating itself). The repetition of the practice did not produce progress in this sense and it was repeated over and over again without any sound improvement in the last version. Music is underused and the fear of sound emptiness translates into the non-use of silence. There is an absolute need for a narrator and explanatory and descriptive dialogues.

c.  From the point of view of the creators and listeners, the conclusions of the textual analysis are ratified. They find it easier to use effects over music and silence, and they use them mainly for the construction of space, finding it more difficult to use them to build characters or express time and structures. The incursion of the narrator in the audio described and dramatized version is a relief to be able to express all that they cannot express with non-verbal sound alone. It is a use that does not entail a variation in the sound of the rest of the sound components that, at the moment the narrator or the characters make an incursion, are ignored and not modified according to the information now provided by the word, remaining as they were from the beginning as if they were a complementary ornament.

The lack of progress between the first and the last wave means that, despite the effort to think only with sound, there is no evolution among the target students, who are old enough for auditory attention and the skills to use sound resources to have already been developed.

The conclusions lead us to propose to educators from kindergarten and primary school the challenge of teaching to think with the ear so that conceptual deafness does not end up being also cognitive. This "functional deafness" causes a total dependence on the word and a disability, due to disuse and lack of skills and abilities in sound resources. The very fact that the thriller is used as a genre, which allows actions that are "very noisy" and, therefore, easy to sonorize naturally, refers to the knowledge acquired in a complete audiovisual way, with sound and visual images, through fiction series and movies. It seems that the visual and the verbal are prevalent in the fictional narrative schemes of the new generations.

This loss of soundscape may be important. The soundscape is the cultural heritage of communities, and the loss of part of it in the creative use and listening can be understood as the beginning of a paradigm shift. It cannot be forgotten that, according to Woodside, "each sound expression is located within a socio-historical context and takes references from specific soundscapes" (2008, p. 2). Moreover, exercising listening by simply following the sound environment with full attention can become "a mechanism that enhances students' creative and innovative skills, given that it suggests processes of auditory discrimination and analysis" (Cárdenas-Soler and Martínez-Chaparro, 2015, p. 137), something that is undoubtedly becoming necessary for the younger generations. The problem lies in the fact that most of the information is filtered unconsciously by both the sender and the receiver, which means that listening in direct face-to-face communication is not conscious and realistic, an attitude that in media communication may have reached a sort of "functional deafness" where one hears but does not listen. Consequently, when it is created, due to the overabundance of visual images and words, there are no prior learning and competencies that predispose younger individuals to decode and take full advantage of the potentials of non-verbal sound elements, which from the point of view of cognitive narrative is also a reduction in the elements that make up the mental schemes of generation and/or understanding of stories.

Since Sartori's homo videns is also becoming homo audiens[2] (Vila, 2021) in recent times, an urgent educational intervention that recovers all the sonorous elements, beyond the word is necessary to avoid a failure in the cognitive narrative of the new generations of virtual natives. Although there is always room for honorable exceptions[3].

## 6.  References

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[2] You can read about it in the blog: https://guillermovilaradio.com/2021/07/22/descubriendo-al-homo-audiens/

[3] As can be seen in the story *El país donde no nieva* (The country where it doesn't snow), by Marisa Felices, adapted by Diego Hidalgo. https://radio.us.es/episodio/ficcion-lab-episodio-08x01-sin-palabras-el-pais-donde-no-nieva/

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**ANNEXES**

**Annex 1. Template for creation**

SOUND FICTION SHORT STORY SCRIPT

| TITLE | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **AUTHOR** **NAME AND SURNAME** **AGE** **EDUCATION** **EMAIL** | | | | | |
| SUMMARY (in five lines) | | | | | |
| TYPE OF SHOT | DURATION | EFFECTS | MUSIC | SILENCE | TYPE OF TRANSITION |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| OTHER SPECIFICATIONS: DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED: | | | | | |

**Source**: own elaboration

**Annex 2. Questionnaire for authors**

| Name | Formation |
|---|---|
| Difficulty with the duration | |
| Difficulty with the exclusive use of sound resources | |
| Difficulty with the use of words | |
| Which narrative categories have been easiest to construct (characters, space, time, action)? | |
| What narrative categories have been most difficult to construct? | |
| How many versions of the script did you make until the final version? | |
| How many stories did you discard due to the obligatory format? | |
| What sound resource do you find most recurrent to replace words? | |
| Did you think of using animals as protagonists? | |
| Did you consider the use of non-verbal human sounds for the construction of the script? If not, why not? | |
| Have you recognized as your own the sound story without words for which you wrote the script? Why? | |

Source: own elaboration

**Annex 3. Questionnaire for adapters**

| Name | Formation |
|---|---|
| ¿Did you encounter difficulties of mismatch between synopsis and sound script to adapt? | |
| Did you have to add or remove elements for the sonorization with effects and music only? | |
| Why? For what purpose? | |
| What sound resources did you find essential for the sonorization without words? | |
| Did you eliminate sound elements when introducing the figure of the narrator in the audio-written version? Which ones? Why? | |
| Did you eliminate the narrator in the dramatized version? Why? | |
| At what point in the process of sound and double adaptation did you find it easiest? | |
| At what point in the process did you find it most difficult? | |
| What sound elements and resources did you use to make up for the lack of sound effects and music in the original scripts? | |
| If you played the dual role of scriptwriter and adaptor, in which role did you feel more comfortable? Why? | |
| How did you construct the characters without words? And once you were able to use words? | |

Source: own elaboration

**Annex 4. Questionnaire for listeners**

| Name | Gender and age |
|---|---|
| Formation | Consumption of sound fiction products |
| Could you describe in story form what you heard (response to first hearing)? | |
| Can you identify if there is a human presence (characters)? How many? | |
| Can you identify spaces? Where does the action take place? | |
| Would you know if time has elapsed? How much time has elapsed? | |
| What has happened? What actions occur? | |
| How have you imagined the character(s)? | |
| Does the story you have interpreted match the story you have just heard (on the audio version)? | |
| What elements were missing in your first interpretation: actions, characters, objects...? | |
| Do you consider that the narrator provides essential information to interpret the story compared to the first version? | |
| Did you find it easier or more difficult to interpret spaces, times, characters, and actions with the narrator? | |
| Do you consider this last version (dramatized version) complete? | |
| Has your perception of the story changed from the previous version? | |
| Write in order of ease of understanding from easiest to least easy the three versions | |

Source: own elaboration

**Annex 5. Sound creation analysis template**

| Analysis of narrative composition | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Title | | | Duration | | | | |
| Author | | | Sound genre | | | | |
| Narrative structure | By diegetic composition | | By time composition | | Story arc | | |
| | Narrative technique/master plots | | | | | | |
| Focalization | External | | Omniscient | | Internal | | |
| Temporal construction | Effects | | Music | | Silence | | |
| Spatial design | Effects | | Music | | Silence | | |
| Characters | Number | | Age | | Gender | | |
| | Person | | Role | | Performer | | |
| | Primary/Secondary | | Actions | | Constituent effects | | |
| Actions/events | Human origin | | Reflexive/transitive | | Individual | | |
| | Non-human origin | | Active/passive | | Group | | |

| Sound and non-sound components (voice considered as an effect) | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Effect | Type of shot/duration | Diegetic/ non-diegetic | Action that it evokes | Human/ non-human | Natural/artificial | Realistic | Metaphorical | Function |
| | | | | | | | |
| Silence | Duration | Narrative point | Function | Relative | Absolute | Reflective pause | Dramatic impasse | Punctuation mark |
| | | | | | | | |
| Music | Type of shot/ duration | Diegetic/ non-diegetic | Function | Musical style | Punctuation mark | With lyrics/ without lyrics | Male/female voice | Meaning of the lyrics |
| | | | | | | | |

Source: own elaboration