

# Silences, press and pandemic

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#### ABSTRACT

The fact of speaking about silence already indicates a contradiction. Silence, as a sign, always has a value, be it positive or negative, but it is never an empty sign.

In recent decades, research on silence has increased from different perspectives. And without a doubt, the state of pandemic we are experiencing has also contributed to the emergence of other forms of the manifestation of silence, certain existing uses being emphasized in some areas, or unforeseeable uses emerging in contexts other than this unfortunate situation.

In this article I propose to offer some outlines of these experiences of silence, or silences, which have become more evident during the pandemic, using quotes and references from the media, especially the press. Different information about silence will serve as a starting point or anchor to reflect on the presence of silence during COVID-19, to make us sensitive (or more sensitive) to the various textures and functions of silence.

#### RESUMEN

El hecho de hablar del silencio ya indica un contrasentido. El silencio, como signo, siempre posee un valor, sea positivo o negativo, pero nunca será un signo vacío. En las últimas décadas la investigación en torno al silencio, desde diferentes ópticas, va en aumento. Y sin duda, el estado de pandemia que estamos viviendo también ha contribuido al hecho de que en este periodo emerjan otras formas de manifestación del silencio, o que se enfatizen determinados valores ya existentes en algunos ámbitos, o que afloren usos imprevisibles en otro contexto que no sea esta desafortunada situación.

En este artículo nos proponemos ofrecer unas pinceladas de estas vivencias del silencio, o de silencios, que se han puesto más de manifiesto durante la pandemia; nos hemos servido de citas y referencias provenientes de los medios de comunicación, especialmente de la prensa. Distintas informaciones sobre el silencio nos servirán de punto de partida o punto de apoyo para reflexionar sobre la presencia del silencio durante la COVID-19, para hacernos sensibles (o más sensibles) a las diversas texturas y funciones del silencio.

## Introduction. Notes on the value of silence

Silences are never empty signs and as such are fundamental elements in social and personal communication. Because of this, referring to silence as simply the absence of noise is insufficient<sup>1</sup>. It is one more component of communication that we should qualify as a complement to speech, not as its opponent.

In our Western<sup>2</sup> culture, the use of silence is in some way stressed by the predominant value we give to the word; to what is said, to what is written, to what is explicit. The special essence of silence<sup>3</sup> means that studies on silence from various fields are expanding their limits and allowing new approaches. That said, we live in the so-called era of the communication and information society or, some may say, of the excess of information, which leaves little space for the evaluation of silence. Barthes (1975) alludes to the society of transmitters in which we live: books, texts, invitations, propaganda, publicity texts; while Raimon Panikkar (1997) refers to “logomachy” as the great epidemic of our time and mentions “sigephobia” (fear of silence) as one of the diseases of the 20th century. As mentioned, silence tends to be evaluated negatively in our Western society (with important nuances and exceptions). It is a sign full of social prejudices that causes us fear, insecurity, and tension. We cling to the word, to the explicit, and we distrust the unsaid, the unwritten, the unmentioned.

As a polyhedral and transversal phenomenon, one of the opportunities to study silence can occur within the scope of the so-called Linguistics of Communication, which encompasses different disciplines and/or perspectives whose common denominator is the importance given to the communicative phenomenon, to the use of language, to the fact of understanding language as a form of action. Among these perspectives is that offered by Pragmatics, which, by having speech acts (or utterances, not sentences) as the focus and also having a component as relevant as communicative *intention* (yet which is intangible, subtle, and ambiguous at the time), and the concept of “interpretation” (activated thanks to the various pragmatic mechanisms), can serve as a framework to explain silence. This approach allows us, for example, to explain certain communicative acts or, in this case, acts of silence, based on various principles or theories; the principle of relevance can clarify why our behaviour becomes more ostensive or relevant when we are expected to say

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1 Let us bear in mind Watzlawick's statement that (2014, p. 15) “Nothing never happens”: everything communicates; it is not possible not to communicate.

2 We use the qualifier *Western* very generically in opposition, in principle, to Eastern culture. However, within this over-all culture there are small and/or large differences in the value given to silence, both from a more theoretical point of view and in its daily uses.

3 Alain Corbin, in his exquisite work *History of silence. From the Renaissance to the present day*, shows how silence has been experienced throughout history through quotes from various authors. In the prelude he uses a term that seems very visual and recognizable to us: the “textures” of silence, which I have taken up again in the abstract. In the prelude to the work, the author also asks, “What better way to experience them [the silences] than to immerse oneself in the quotes of the numerous authors who have undertaken a true aesthetic search? By reading them, each one of us puts our sensitivity to the test. History has tried too often to ‘explain’. When it addresses the world of emotions, it must also, and above all, make us feel (...)” (2019, p. 8).

something and do not, or, as M<sup>a</sup> Victoria Escandell affirms: “silence (...) has authentic communicative value when it is presented as a real alternative to using the word” (1996, p. 35) and “usually the decision not to speak is slower than that of doing it” (1996, p. 36).

If, from the theory of perception, we conceive of reality in terms of figure/background, then in our Western tradition and under normal circumstances, speech would be the figure and silence the background. When silence becomes the figure placed in the foreground it causes us discomfort. In these conditions we conceive silence as a lack of cooperation with the interlocutor since courtesy prompts us to “say something” in order to maintain social relations. For this reason, “talking for the sake of talking” is not negative, but necessary; small talk (also called minor conversation, banal conversation, light conversation, etc.), according to Estrella Montolío, is important to “keep relationships well oiled” (2020, p. 67) and is very useful to fill in those tense silences mentioned.

From another perspective, we can also relate silence to non-verbal communication which may help reduce discomfort or decipher the intention of this silence when present. In any case, the most interesting and significant silence is perhaps that expressed as a real alternative to words; that voluntary, intentional silence which is not accompanied by gestures (think of the silence in a telephone conversation, for example), whose meaning is magnified and at the same time causes us concern.

Taking into account these prior considerations, I would like to contribute some reflections on those silences that have manifested and continue to manifest most ostensibly in this period of pandemic. As we know, the transmission of the coronavirus has had (and will have) serious consequences in all areas: from health to the socioeconomic and cultural and also the personal spheres.

This article seeks to contribute reflections on the presence of these silences from a transversal point of view by referring to them in different contexts<sup>4</sup>. To do this, I have selected various information from the media, especially the press, but also from academic documents. I have taken into account headlines, reviews, opinion pieces, interviews, and, as indicated above, some other scenarios. Most examples come from *La Vanguardia* between January 2020 and May 2021, but they alternate with examples from other newspapers, as well as quotes from authors and works that have made silence the focus of attention, regardless of the phenomenon of the current pandemic.

The purpose was to observe the news related to the pandemic that had a relationship with silence, both directly and indirectly. The examples provided are intended as a small sample of those values that have seemed most significant to me. My intention is not to discuss these appearances of different forms of silence in an exhaustive way, but to select specific representations as an illustration to give rise to reflection.

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4 The article by Nicolás José Lavagnino (2020), “Silences and pandemic”, reflects on the fact that the crisis also depends on the silences involved.

## Silence and stillness

(...) Ah, in the terrible silence of the room  
the clock with its sound of silence! (...)<sup>5</sup>

According to Poyatos (1994), silence and stillness are the pillars of culture. In our culture we usually associate sound with movement and silence with stillness, although there may be silence in stillness and silence in movement<sup>6</sup>.

Because of this, we usually associate silence and stillness in everyday contexts with “doing nothing” in a negative sense. Some people need to move continuously to avoid feeling they are wasting time. Others, on the other hand, seek out spaces of silence in order to get away from movement and the hectic day-to-day.

We forget that stillness and silence could or should often occur prior to action, something that is increasingly rare in these times when speed and imposed or self-imposed urgency obtrude on our living space. This may explain the emergence of phenomena such as FoMO (“fear of missing out”), an expression describing a new form of anxiety that emerged after the popularization of mobile phones and social networks and which manifests as a compulsive need to be connected (Torres, 2020).

At the other extreme, and as a result of the above, we are also increasingly witnessing the birth of movements exalting slowness, such as the “slow city” (which proposes greener cities with fewer billboards, reduced speed, etc.) and “slow food”, which focuses on enjoying gastronomy and tranquillity.

For a few weeks during this period of pandemic, we were all able to feel a new silence that was previously exclusive to night-time: the silence in the streets and in daily activities derived from confinement. We were not used to it. We associated those moments of silence with specific contexts: hospitals, libraries, churches, etc., or the night.

Just one of the many perceptible changes derived from the context of COVID-19 has been this stillness resulting from the various periods of confinement; weeks in which being able to leave the house or take a walk became an unexpected necessity and luxury. But at the same time, those silent streets have allowed us to perceive or discover sounds normally muffled by constant noise. As David Le Breton writes, “walking is also a journey through silence and an enjoyment of ambient sound, since a spirit that loves to wander along the shoulder of a freeway or the ditch of a national highway is not conceivable” (2014, p. 69). And later, “Some sounds infiltrate the silence, without managing to disturb it; sometimes, on the contrary, what they achieve is to awaken the ear to the auditory quality of a place that until then had gone unnoticed” (Le Breton, 2014,

<sup>5</sup> Pessoa (1998), *Poemas de Álvaro de Campos y otros poemas con fecha*.

<sup>6</sup> Pablo d’Ors points out: “First of all, it must be said that silence in stillness is very different from silence in movement. It is scientifically proven that eyes that do not move lead to greater concentration in the subject than if they are in motion” (2013, p. 61).

p. 70). This relates to that function of silence as a receptacle for other sounds referred to by Poyatos (1994)<sup>7</sup>.

For a while we have been able to partially forget about noise and its adverse effects in the short or long term: the loss of the ability to detect faint sounds, stress and fatigue, sleep and behaviour disorders, decreased cognitive abilities, communication difficulties, irritability in social relationships<sup>8</sup>. Another of its negative consequences are the possible panic attacks that derive from noise in the workplace and that affects the brain. Similarly, according to scientific research, the noise most harmful to humans is that of road traffic, while the most hated are noises from building sites, barking, or the garbage truck (Rius, 2010).

But we should not simply reduce noise to an easily perceptible and measurable phenomenon but should also include noise that is “unwanted by the receiver” and only perceptible in a background silence: “Noise is all sound that is unwanted by the receiver; the sound of the drop of water from the neighbour’s sink is of a negligible level, but if it prevents us from sleeping, it becomes noise”<sup>9</sup>.

As stated in the presentation of the online event held on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021 to mark International Noise Awareness Day:

Coexistence with sound is sometimes very difficult and the pandemic has further strained relationships. Confinement has opened our ears to new ‘unexpected sound sensations’. Suddenly, a large part of the world’s population, especially those who live in large cities, have discovered what is known as silence and that it is not the absence of sound.

(...) Sounds hidden for decades, swallowed up by the noise of vehicles, have returned. What effects has this experience had on people? Because ‘silence is quality of life’, it is respect for nature and it is also sustainable, now we must talk about silence and much more<sup>10</sup> (GRAUSTIC, 2021).

In relation to this minimized street noise in times of confinement, one of our cultural behaviours that is different to forms of social courtesy in other countries is background noise or the noise that people emit, which is common on transport systems. This noise is more noticeable on buses than on the subway, for example, and at certain times of day.

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7 This scene related by Nikos Kazantzaki (1960-1975) and given to us by Le Breton (2014, p. 78) seems to me both beautiful and illustrative: “The word fails when trying to describe the power of an instant or the solemnity of the place. Kazantzaki walks with a friend in the depths of a forest on Mount Athos, on the road that leads to Karyes: «It seemed that we were entering an immense church: the sea, forests of chestnut trees, mountains and above, like a dome, the open sky. I turned to my friend: ‘Why don’t we talk’, I said, wanting to break a silence that was beginning to weigh on me. ‘We speak’, my friend replied, lightly touching my shoulder, ‘we speak, but the language of angels, silence’. And abruptly, as if he had gotten angry: ‘What do you want us to say? What is beautiful, that our heart has wings and wants to fly, that we are on a path that leads to Paradise? Words, words ... Shut up!’»” (Kazantzaki, 1960-1975, p. 234-235).

8 These are some of the consequences of noise mentioned in the article “An enemy that is not silent” by Mayte Rius (2010).

9 Santiago Páez, physicist of the Spanish Society of Acoustics, cited by Rius (2010).

10 Terms in quotes are emphasis from the original source.

But we do not commonly find posters or recommendations encouraging us to speak quietly or remain silent on these means of transportation.

During COVID-19, the advertising campaign Sst (March 2021) was announced: “«Sst», the new action on the public transport network promoting the recommendation to travel in silence”, a step over and above the prevention measures adopted during the pandemic:

Using the onomatopoeia “Sst”, the ATM is initiating a direct impact action in order to raise awareness among and educate users, who generate far fewer aerosols when silent and therefore help reduce the risk of infection.

Numerous scientific studies warn of the risk of coronavirus transmission via aerosols, tiny droplets that come out of the mouth especially when speaking. In the face of this warning, the recommendation is to remain silent to ensure safety (Rodalies de Catalunya, 2021).

### The silence of the arts

Artistic experiences about silence are numerous and are increasingly produced in different artforms: literature, music, painting, architecture, and so on.<sup>11</sup>

Special mention should be given to the artist Tres, who died a few years ago and who was behind creative and disturbing shows such as *Muted 1999*, *Cóctel silencioso*, *Bosque sonoro*, *Concierto para apagar*<sup>12</sup>, among many other initiatives.

At this point, however, I want to highlight a work by the artist Marina Abramovic, awarded the 2021 Princess of Asturias Award for the Arts in January of this year. This was the headline that appeared in the newspaper *Ara*: “Princess of Asturias Award for the Arts 2021 for the great exponent of ‘performance’, Marina Abramovic. Her work includes actions such as sitting at MoMA for 700 hours” (Serra, 2021).

As the text recalls, one of her most acclaimed performances was at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, where she sat in a chair, immobile and in silence, for more than 700 hours locking eyes with visitors, who tried to hold her gaze (in 2010). The review recalls the creator’s relationship with another artist, Laysiepen (Ulay), with whom she collaborated on a series of unusual projects, and which ended a few years later. In the aforementioned project, they met again: “they looked at each other and Abramovic’s tears fell” (Serra, 2021).

Keeping your gaze fixed on another person without moving is one of the most complex communicative actions. Special control is needed to cope with the strain of the still gaze. The artist was able to endure the situation until her feelings had to emerge through an irrepressible physiological act: crying, in this personal context.

<sup>11</sup> An interesting journey through “this seduction of silence through its own language” is provided by Fernando Castro (2019, p. 10).

<sup>12</sup> During the performance there was a blackout and a total silence emerged in the Escola Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona (2008).

Another type of event illustrates the situation experienced by another area that has suffered the consequences of the pandemic. The restriction or cancellation of cultural activities has allowed us to show and feel the loneliness of the streets mentioned above. On the occasion of the New York premiere of the play *Plaza Suite* (a comedy about the evolution of a marriage staged at the Hudson Theatre), journalist Francesc Peirón dedicated a few lines to describing the unusual urban landscape left by COVID-19:

The theatres that abound in that area [Times Square], and that make up the mythical Broadway, are only stone buildings; silent, without that bustle that characterizes that moment when the curtain rises or falls. On their marquees they advertise stories frozen in time (Peirón, 2020).

We are experiencing another particular and parallel example with the reopening of shows, in this case<sup>13</sup>:

This context of a pandemic and coughing being one of the possible symptoms of coronavirus means that it no longer ruins short or long passages in the musical story, nor does it affect the concentration of the artists and the audience. What has happened to coughing at concerts? Does the presence of Covid19 show that it was possible to suppress it all along? Have we endured it all these decades for nothing? “I am delighted that people are silent. Not even a fly was heard at the recent open rehearsal for Mozart’s ‘Requiem’. It was delicious”, says a marvelling Josep Pons, musical director of the Liceu. He is not the only one who cannot believe it. In these difficult times, live music can be enjoyed more than ever. (...) “It’s true – Estefania Sort, theatre manager at the Gran Teatre, corroborates – no one coughs! (...) I don’t know if it is because people have returned to the theatre with great respect and enthusiasm, or because we are afraid people will give us dirty looks.” Even behaviour has changed, says Sort, people move less from their chairs, “everyone has become very obedient and aware of the situation and the effort being made to reopen” (Chavarría, 2020).

### **Silence and gender**

Confinement has aggravated the situation of gender violence which, unfortunately, adds to a consistently topical issue. According to various studies, however, confinement has also caused “another pandemic”:

The increasing isolation and barriers that make it difficult to file a report and request help have had a direct consequence in an increase in this violence. The paradox is that the decrease in complaints and murders may lead to the mistaken belief that this increase has not occurred.

<sup>13</sup> Coughing, like other physiological or emotional reactions (sighing, laughing, yawning, hiccups, etc.) is part of paralinguistic, as indicated by the specialist in non-verbal communication Poyatos (1994), together with the physical qualities of sound and quasi-lexical elements, which Poyatos calls “alternatings”. Certain uses of silence are also found in this paralinguistic domain.

Rather, it has been made invisible and limited to the privacy of many homes. Silence is an effective accomplice of violence (...) the pandemic has shown us that other social “syndemic”<sup>14</sup> that leeches off social ties. Invisible violence is powerful because of that same invisibility, because of the family isolation in which it is carried out. The social distance here protects the aggressor and contaminates family ties (Ubieto, 2021).

In parallel, the pandemic has also influenced the decrease in the visibility of male violence against women in the press, which has received “less media attention” due to frequent information about the pandemic: “Covid-19 eclipsed male violence against women in the press. Coverage plummeted by 61% although the decrease in fatalities only fell by 24%” (Neira, 2021).

In another vein, it has been observed that “the pandemic has widened the pay gap for women”:

(...) and it has also postponed dreams. At the European forum ‘Women Business & Justice’, organized by the Col·legi de l’Advocacia de Barcelona, the President of the Senate, Pilar Llop, warned that Covid “has squandered female talent, which is now at risk of a setback”. Many women lack a room of their own in which to pursue their studies, projects, or scholarships. This is evidenced by studies carried out by the Complutense University on the impact of confinement. The old dynamic of the division of tasks persists; before the virus, female researchers spent an average of 6.2 hours per week working on their publications. Today, their study time has been reduced to 1.6 hours while that of men has increased by more than an hour (Bonet, 2021).

## Death

A fragment of the article “The return of death” (Puigverd, 2020) is presented below as representative of the situation in terms of the end-of-life care brought about by the pandemic and which, for many, represents a new approach to existence:

Now the hypothesis of death is varnished, and it shines. The coronavirus is at once a metaphor and an expression of the change of era inaugurated by the fall of the Twin Towers. The ugly face of globalization began then. Every year the uncertainty, the fear, the restlessness shall increase. That is to say, death once again has the prominence it achieved during previous stages of history.

The 21st century is testing the great era of prosperity and peace that we Westerners have known since World War II. Growth, widespread consumption, vacations and trips, social services, pensions, education (...). We ran on nonstop accumulating excesses. Abruptly brought to a halt by a microscopic virus, we believe we are one step away from the precipice. There is no choice but to rethink the route (Puigverd, 2020).

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<sup>14</sup> In the RAE Observatory of Words the term is defined as “a neologism not established in general use that is documented to refer to a situation in which several epidemics coexist over time and mutually strengthen each other”.

On the other hand, and in line with this, there has been a clear increase in tributes to health personnel and other professionals who work on the front line. The ritual of the minute of silence dedicated to the deceased has grown exponentially. The following information demonstrating how the minute of ritual silence has been prolonged to two (which seems to be the origin of this ritual act) caught my attention:

The Consell de Col·legis de Metges de Catalunya (CCMC), together with the rest of the professional colleges of the health sector in Catalonia, has convened two minutes of silence at 12 o'clock in memory of the colleagues who have died fighting the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>15</sup> (Col·legi de Metges de Barcelona, 2020).

We also return to one of those many tributes to the victims of coronavirus. I selected this one specifically because of the reading of the poem "Silencio" by Octavio Paz:

The nurse from the Hospital in Barcelona [Vall d'Hebron] will be the only one of the three people who will speak at a sober funeral honouring and respecting all those who have died due to the coronavirus. (...) actor José Sacristán will read some verses of Octavio Paz's poem "Silencio" (Sen, 2020).

Among so much news and so many medical announcements, interest in writing about or raising awareness of the importance of accompanying people in those final moments of their lives has also increased, as has reflection on the importance of a more palliative type of medicine:

What do you say to someone who is dying? There are times in life when it is not necessary to give answers. Sometimes what is needed is presence. There are relatives, friends and health workers who say, "I won't see him because I don't know what to say to him", don't say anything to him, be there, accompany him in silence, take his hand<sup>16</sup> (Rius, 2021).

In this same vein, are these words by Antoni Bassas (2021): "But in the midst of so much science and so many statistics, the two doctors remember that in the middle of the twenty-first century, there is still an unsurpassable therapeutic act that no professional should forget: taking the patient by the hand"<sup>17</sup>.

The dilemma between explaining the pain of a loss or privately preserving it within each of us is shown in the article "You have to look at the dead child" (Piquer, 2021): "the di-

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<sup>15</sup> The event took place on May 14, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Words by Montserrat Esquerda, paediatrician and bioethics expert, in an interview conducted by Mayte Rius (2021).

<sup>17</sup> This is the final part of a column dedicated to the publication of a book by Argimon and Padrós (Argimon, Padrós and Bruna, 2021) on the medical profession and the pandemic (Bassas, 2021).

lemma between making a personal ordeal public or creating a bigger silence”, in this case caused by an unwanted abortion (the article appeared following the publication of the work by Anna Starobinets: *You have to look*).

### **Around courtesy**

As mentioned on previous pages, the use of silence in certain contexts and from the perspective of Western culture is generally viewed as negative. One example is the abandonment of the social network Twitter by Ada Colau, mayor of Barcelona. Among other reasons, Colau says:

In addition, another phenomenon has been created that I call “the tyranny of permanent presence”. It seems we have to think about everything all the time. If you don’t suddenly tweet about a controversial topic, someone comes out to say that you are very quiet (...) I will continue in other less polarized and less fast-paced networks<sup>18</sup> (Colau, 2021, quoted in *El País*, 2021).

We ask ourselves, is the non-response or the option of silence a lack of courtesy? Does the supposed freedom of participation in social networks become, on the contrary, a form of slavery? Are there different rules for how public figures use social networks? Also in relation to courteous acts, on the recent death of Xavier Folch, Albert Om wrote him a letter in his usual space on the back page of the newspaper *Ara*, entitled “El pare del meu amic” (Om, 2021) including what he calls “an apparently minor detail”:

That you would rather listen than talk seemed very uncommon to someone with your career and intellectual stature. During lunch I was attentive to your words because I wanted to hear you talk about your experiences and, wherever I was going, I left your house captivated by your complicit silences. You let go of a question, you were silent like you were withdrawing from it, but I always noticed your attentive gaze, your eyes fixed on me to encourage me to talk about projects with your child (...) You didn’t talk, but you did talk. You didn’t write, but you did write (Om, 2021).

This manifestation of being silent to make way for the other to speak reminds us that the description of the “art of being silent”, made explicit in the work of the same title: “[*The art of being silent*], has not lost any of the practical purposes of the rhetorical arts: it is not an art of silence, but rather *an art of doing something to the other through silence*”<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> The quotation marks appear in the original document.

<sup>19</sup> The original title is *L'art de se taire: Principalement en matière de religion* (1771). Although this may lead us to think it is a reflection on religious or monastic silence, the content of the work can be extrapolated to other contexts. The italics are by the authors of the prologue to the work, Jean-Jacques Courtine and Claudine Haroche (Dinouart, 1999).

### **Personal communication: the importance of non-verbality**

Allusions to the importance of non-verbal communication, as seen in previous sections, have again been highlighted or have increased during this period of pandemic. Below are reproduced some mentions of the importance of this relevant form of human communication in an article published in *La Vanguardia* (Molins, 2020). In it, we find statements particularly from specialists in the field of psychology, such as the following: “The important thing in communication is intention and with the mask you lose it”, says Ignasi Ivern. Or in the words of Mireia Cabero: “In this situation, synaesthetic people have it worse, because they have had to stop touching”; this and other interesting comments remind us, once again, of the consequences that the pandemic has had and will have on forms of personal communication (Molins, 2020).

Lastly, we return to the words of Jordi Basté indirectly illustrating how the absence of words, of the unsaid (in this case, of the unwritten), can also offer relevant information. The journalist expresses this in an article including these words as a reflection:

A year later [from March 2020]<sup>20</sup> politicians have apparently already moved on. It is very telling that the words *health*, *pandemic* or *doctors* did not appear in the first three pages of political information (16, 17, and 18) in *La Vanguardia* yesterday (Basté, 2021)

### **In conclusion**

The pandemic is changing our lives. We perceive this in our day-to-day experience and will appreciate it in the near future with consequences that we intuit but cannot yet foresee. Much of the information managed by the mass media exposes these insights and reminds us of situations previously experienced or points out prospects on which we will have to reflect.

The ways in which silence is shown, as a necessary option, a complex phenomenon that is always present in forms of communication although not always easily interpretable (but is the word not also interpretable?), can also help us to briefly pause and observe reality with a new perspective.

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<sup>20</sup> Information in brackets is mine.

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