

Training and field of scriptwriters in Chile: qualitative analysis from interviews

Formación y campo de los guionistas en Chile: análisis cualitativo a partir de entrevistas

Formação e atuação dos roteiristas no Chile: análise qualitativa a partir de entrevistas

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ABSTRACT | The article is part of a larger study to describe the teaching of audiovisual scriptwriting and the training of scriptwriters in contemporary Chile. The results come from the application of the semi-structured interview method to ten renowned national scriptwriters and teachers in the field, verifying the existence of aesthetic orientations, technical requirements, relationships with other agents in the field or ways of working for creative writing in the stage pre-production for film and television. Open-ended questionnaires were used, the aim of which was to generate the replica of a conversation from certain predefined thematic nuclei. Based on these generative nuclei, the interviews were developed in a flexible manner, with the aim of reinforcing the non-standardized nature of the instrument. What is presented in this synthesis are common points and other controversial aspects. They have no statistical value, but rather show the importance of the complexity of the generated discourses.

KEYWORDS: script; cinema; television; Chile; audiovisual industry; scriptwriter.

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RESUMEN | *El artículo es parte de un estudio que busca describir la enseñanza del guion audiovisual y la formación de los guionistas en el Chile contemporáneo. Los resultados provienen de la aplicación del método de la entrevista semiestructurada a diez reconocidos guionistas nacionales y docentes del área, constatando la existencia de orientaciones estéticas, requerimientos técnicos, relaciones con otros agentes del campo o formas de trabajo para la escritura creativa en la etapa de preproducción para cine y televisión. Se emplearon cuestionarios de preguntas abiertas cuyo objetivo era generar, a partir de ciertos núcleos temáticos predefinidos, la réplica de una conversación. Con base en esos núcleos generativos, las entrevistas se desarrollaron de manera flexible, para reforzar el carácter no estandarizado del instrumento. Lo que se presenta en esta síntesis son puntos en común y otros aspectos controversiales. No tienen valor estadístico, sino que muestran el sentido de la complejidad de los discursos generados.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *guion; cine; televisión; Chile; industria audiovisual; guionista.*

RESUMO | O artigo faz parte de um estudo que busca descrever o ensino da escrita audiovisual e a formação de roteiristas no Chile contemporâneo. Os resultados advêm da aplicação do método de entrevista semiestructurada a dez renomados roteiristas e professores nacionais da área, verificando a existência de orientações estéticas, exigências técnicas, relações com outros agentes da área ou formas de trabalhar a escrita criativa em a pré-produção cênica para cinema e televisão. Foram utilizados questionários abertos cujo objetivo era gerar, a partir de determinados núcleos temáticos pré-definidos, a réplica de uma conversa. Com base nestes núcleos geradores, as entrevistas desenvolveram-se de forma flexível, com o objectivo de reforçar o carácter não estandarizado do instrumento. O que se apresenta nesta síntese são pontos em comum e outros aspectos controversos. Não têm valor estatístico, mas mostram o significado da complexidade dos discursos gerados.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *roteiro; cinema; televisão; Chile; indústria audiovisual; roteirista.*

INTRODUCTION

When it comes to the term ‘screenplay’, the specialized literature is generally in agreement: “text prior to the shooting of a film” (Aranda & De Felipe, 2006, p. 15), “written document containing the dialog and technical details necessary for the production of a film” (Parker, 2012, p. 23) and “play or radio or television program or piece of writing that contains the details of everything that the play needs for its production” (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2014, p. 16) are some of the common definitions that come close to the term plot outline. In other words, the script is a provisional instrument that is no longer needed at the end of the production. In the words of Antonio Sánchez-Escalonilla (2016), “it is the dream film (...) A temporary state, a transitory form destined to metamorphose and disappear” (p. 7). This makes it a creation that is born to die. However, the transience of the screenplay is not new. The vast literature on the subject emphasizes this peculiarity, such as the classic handbooks by Syd Field (2004) and Black Snyder (2010) or the theoretical works of Michel Chion (1989) and Carrière and Bonitzer (1991), which highlight the creativity and anonymous work of the screenwriter. Indeed, it is curious (or surprising) that if a spectator who wants to read the script of a newly released movie before watching it, and if he/she insists on doing so, is confronted with three difficulties. Firstly, the likelihood of them seeing the text is slim (in the Chilean industry, a very high percentage of these working documents end up in the garbage can). Secondly, they will realize with some dismay that what they read in the script is not exactly what they see on the big screen (there will be changes of names, streets, or characters will be changed and, in the worst case, they will realize that the ending is different). And the third difficulty is that it is a script that can only be used in a limited way by those involved in the filming, since the actions or dialogs that appear in a scene are literary limited or oversimplified (Jiménez Gómez, 2020; Gutiérrez, 2018). All these characteristics would explain that it is very likely that there was no script at all when a movie was made, as is the case in Hollywood. That is, the screenplays used in Chile (Dittus, 2017; Urrutia & Ferrari, 2023) are limited to disorganized sketches and short scripts based on ideas that constitute a collaborative creative process.

According to the semiological definition, aesthetics examines the formal ends and means of art. In this sense, writing is perceived as a physical manifestation attributed to a concretizing symbol. It is this aesthetic criterion that makes it possible to speak of a good or bad script, defined in methodological terms (the creative process of the script) and in terms of the results (the structure of the screenplay). To know how to tell a story in the cinema, this structure must be mastered to some extent. For 120 years, cinema (as an art and as an industry)

has used this structure to shape the images and dialog that become part of the finished film (García-Noblejas, 1982). In the last forty years, the most widely used methodologies for film analysis have been developed from semiotic and post-semiotic studies with structuralist influences, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, feminist theory and gender studies (Aumont & Marie, 1990; Vanoye & Goliot-Lété, 2008). In Chile, analyzes dealing with local audiovisual poetics stand out under different aspects, such as: lateral, nomadic, centrifugal, nostalgic, imperfect, militant, pamphletic, local, precarious or historical. They are the result of aesthetic (Cavallo & Maza, 2010; Horta, 2013; Saavedra, 2013; Urrutia, 2013), methodological (Luebbert 2009), historical-epistemological (Stange & Salinas, 2009; Córdova & Rodríguez, 2021), semiological (Corro, 2012; Navarro, 2014; Soublette, 2011) or cultural (Villarroel, 2014) analyzes. In television, on the other hand, audience studies are at the center of interest and when it comes to the narrative structure of series or soap operas, the theoretical guidelines are anchored in memory or drama (Antezana & Cabalín, 2023).

For the same reason, it is the relationship that has characterized the link between literature and cinema (and today, with television and the transmedia format). It is the circular debate as to whether the screenplay is a literary genre or not. Like novelists, screenwriters also consider themselves to be storytellers (Brenes, 1992). As Córdova and Rodríguez (2023) state, we are dealing here with a work “that has taken on a life of its own from its purely utilitarian purpose (to serve as a guide during filming) and has become a key element in the structuring of a movie” (p. 30). These structural influences of literary roots extend to creative paradigms and stylistic resources of various kinds. These parameters of audiovisual writing are increasingly prevalent in screenwriting schools around the world and are referred to by Hollywood as “formulas for success” (Tubau, 2011, p. 17). In this academic scenario, the texts of Linda Seger (2011), Syd Field (2004), Robert McKee (2002), Black Snyder (2010) or Christopher Vogler (2002), among others, have become more than recommendations. Nowadays, they are required reading in professional courses and workshops, where they are taught as real treatises or dogmatic formulas. However, this normativity is, however, over 2500 years old. Aristotle’s *Poetics* can be considered the first dramaturgical work in which the principles of the plot and the three acts guarantee the cohesion and discursive unity of the play, considered as a whole (Cano, 1999; Aristotle, 2006). The rules defined transform the dramatic text (whether in theater, cinema, television, or digital media) into a specific proposal for certain conditions of beauty.

METHODOLOGY

This article is part of a research project whose aim is to describe the teaching of screenwriting theory and practice of screenwriting in Chile through an analysis of the curricular approaches and professional assessment models currently used in the field of audiovisual writing. This, in turn, is divided into four specific objectives: a) to describe the curricular approaches, dramaturgical models and teaching methods used for the training of professional screenwriters in Chile; b) to evaluate the profile of those who teach the theory and practice of screenwriting; c) to characterize the role of the screenwriter in the financing of audiovisual projects; and d) to compare the formal teaching of the theory and practice of screenwriting in Chile with the international standards in creative writing. The analysis of surveys conducted as part of the same study of syllabi of university screenwriting course curricula have reinforced the main themes and raised new questions. In the previous phases of the research, we have learned what the key players in this process say - and how they say it - and we have responded more precisely to some of the objectives. The outcomes of professional activities in the creative industries are more than just a collection of actions carried out by rational individuals. They are communities of practitioners who, informally engage in an ongoing conversation about the vicissitudes of their profession or trade and about its connection to other segments of society and to other collective activities.

This is a qualitative, descriptive and exploratory project for which ten semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with renowned national screenwriters: six men and four women aged between 25 and 55. Their professional backgrounds are very diverse: two playwrights, two actors, two journalists, two filmmakers, one sociologist and one surgeon (regardless of gender). All of them have had teaching or academic experience in the field, either at undergraduate or postgraduate level, at public or private universities, at both simultaneously or in courses and workshops. Nine of them are Chilean and live in Santiago, while one is a foreigner and lives in the country. From the ten interviews conducted, it can be deduced that the national screenwriters form a very small group of people of both sexes who are currently under thirty and come from very different professional backgrounds, essentially playwrights, journalists, filmmakers and actors who have all become screenwriters.

The interviewees represent a wide range of experience in audiovisual activities in Chile, and the set of subjects has been tested or elaborated in previous academic publications.

The interviews, which took place between March 2018 and August 2019, were conducted in person or by videoconference at the place and time previously agreed

with each interviewee, and were tape-recorded and fully transcribed. Particular and specific interview guides were used in each case in order to provide conceptual guidelines based on certain predefined thematic cores. All interviews took place in a fluid and relaxed manner, in a climate of trust and intimacy, with the full cooperation of the different interviewees involved in the study. Starting from the structural themes, the interviews were developed in a flexible way to reinforce the non-standardized character of the instrument, which in the Anglo-Saxon tradition is called “elite interview, exploratory or non-standardized interview”. In this method, the aim is to allow interviewees to define the structure and meaning of the narrative in relation to their own relevant categories in order to draw the interviewer’s attention to different entry points from which the thematic cores are extracted and, thus identifying the collective narrative that the script professionals define for themselves and all their related activities.

The interview is generally an open dialog in which themes and subthemes are proposed, accepted or rejected within the discursive context of a topic. It is within this structure that the arguments emerge. To obtain their symbolic meaning, as Krippendorff (1990) calls it, categories of analysis were defined to compare the discursive visions of the interviewees. In this way, we have identified the interviewees’ visions of the industry and its creative dimension, the intertextuality that binds them to the audiovisual field, the implicit elements that underlie what is being said (Cerdeña Massó, 1986) and the dialogic relationships that sustain their vision of cinema, television and the new digital narratives, as well as the role of the screenwriter in this space. For the final discursive analysis, the method of constant comparison method was used, breaking down the data progressively and thus facilitating the updates and changes that were necessary at the different moments of information gathering.

According to the interviews (in which we spoke about colleagues in the field), a small and select group of Chilean screenwriters is divided into three generations: young or aspiring screenwriters, between 25 and 35 years old, of both genders, who aspire to a career in the audiovisual or communication sector or who work on an audiovisual production project as screenwriters; moderately established screenwriters, a group made up of middle-aged writers who are moderately established in terms of their reputation and career, between 35 and 50 years old, who have worked on several television projects (mainly soap operas) and who have more than one project, as well as older or established screenwriters. The third group, which is even smaller, consists of men and women over the age of 50 with a lot of professional experience in writing original scripts or adaptations, mainly of soap operas and series, in the first place, or documentaries and feature films, in the second group.

Below are the results of the interviews, organized by thematic categories and subcategories, with the analysis or conclusion given first, followed by the relevant quote that serves as evidence. The obligation of confidentiality prevents us from mentioning their names. Therefore, in this report (and in other reports of the project), when transcribing fragments of responses from the interviews, we try to avoid identifying the sources. To prevent the reader from confusing the quotes (in quotation marks in this paper), they have been anonymized by the letter E. Thus, we have E1, E2, E3, etc., selecting the most representative of the sample. What we present here is a small selection of a set of opinions and perceptions of authoritative voices in the field of Chilean screenwriting, which together amount to more than ten hours of interviews and more than 200 pages of transcription. This synthesis attempts to reflect both commonalities and controversial themes that emerged in the heat of conversation. They do not have no statistical value, but rather show a sense of the complexity of the discourses.

RESULTS: THEMATIC CATEGORIES AND SUBCATEGORIES

Based on this methodology, the following preliminary categories were formed, which allow us to outline the role of the screenwriter in the Chilean audiovisual industry, his/her profile and his/her fields of learning are the following: training and career of screenwriters, study centers (universities and film schools), methodology and prevailing currents in the teaching of screenwriting, training in competitive audiovisual projects, the screenplay in the audiovisual industry, institutional framework for government support of projects, and, finally, the professional field and working conditions for the screenwriter. These seven categories were analyzed schematically so that we were able to provide explanatory keys for the construction of new interpretative hypotheses.

Training and trajectory of screenwriters in Chile

There is a consensus that training in screenwriting is the weakest point within the film or audiovisual schools, which give more priority to technical aspects more than to content or the story. Those who have taken more than one screenwriting course in their undergraduate education also recognize the weakness of the content to such an extent that they felt they knew nothing about writing when they graduated. For example:

“I had actually had three of screenwriting classes, but they were very bad, they were very, very bad. When I left film school, I basically thought I knew nothing about screenwriting. They never taught me what a scene was” (E7).

“There are differences between counting and learning to count” (E5).

This theme is reinforced by the different educational backgrounds (different training) of those who write screenplays. The screenwriters interviewed have studied communication (journalism), dramaturgy (theater), cinema or other different academic fields. However, contrary to what might be thought, when comparing the work of theater professionals in the art of screenwriting, some of the interviewees noted that in these cases there is a notable absence of aids in audiovisual language, indicating profound differences between the teaching of screenwriting and dramaturgy.

In the history of screenwriting training, there is a before and after. Before, with people who had no special training in screenwriting (older generation) and who learned through the practice of working life, and after (new generation) with people who have had academic training in screenwriting imparted by professionals of the previous generation. There are names of professionals who are always mentioned as references in the industry. There is also the fact that today there is a new generation of young screenwriters who have extensive training and a lot of quality, which offers better prospects for the future. This recognition goes hand in hand with the fact that the interviewees also studied on their own initiative:

“Back then, there was no diploma, no master’s degree, nothing. I always wanted to study film and television and screenwriting” (E6).

However, this situation, however, does not ignore the importance of practice and the personal interest in continuous improvement.

“I continued to study on my own, in the United States and in Spain, especially in those two countries, with teachers from those two countries, online and in person, and whatever I could finance” (E8).

“I started to improve myself, I bought a few books and my parents helped me to continue learning on my own. That’s how I learned about writing and structure” (E7).

Those who argue that the script cannot only be learned, but must be experienced in areas such as directing, producing or teaching, go in the same direction.

“It was never my intention, let us say, I have always had a knack for writing, but it was not my original intention and it was only later that I took a liking to it” (E7).

“I have had a lot of things to do. So, in that sense, when I was asked me to talk about the topic of teaching screenwriting, the three things came together quite naturally combined for me” (E10).

The idea of a relationship between apprentice and teacher in the field of screenwriting is also repeatedly emphasized by the various interviewees, with the latter imparting a certain knowledge to someone new to the field. This indirectly confirms the idea that in order to learn screenwriting, one must leave college and join the audiovisual market.

Study centers: universities and film schools

Today, in Santiago de Chile alone, there are more than 20 film or audiovisual schools of varying degrees of excellence and prestige. Apart from the educational projects specific to each higher education center (universities or film schools), the interviewees affirm that it is the creative writing lecturers who are responsible for the explosion of educational offerings and the increasing professionalization of screenwriting. Some reference names are mentioned repeatedly. However, the quality of the offer is confronted with problems that do not only affect the audiovisual field: equipment, number of students or focus of curricula. It is even pointed out that one of the most common training strategies are screenwriting residencies, which served to create short films as a necessary prior step before the production of feature films.

“...with regard to the screenplay residency, as I told you before, we realized that, of course, when we were with the short films everything was going quite well with the short films, of course, and that there was a great desire to make feature films, and fictional feature films” (E3).

One of the interviewees stated that (s)he addressed the problem by “grabbing the bull by the horns” (E6) and in a way tried to remedy an obvious administrative/pedagogical malfunction. Nevertheless, the effort to improve the course, to systematize it, to make television the way it should be, and to make a good selection of projects is also acknowledged. The same interviewee also stated that he aspires to obtain a full-time contract, reflecting an interest in assuming a greater teaching load and commitment to education. It is a common path for the various interviewees to move into teaching after becoming outstanding professionals in the field.

“I had to be flexible and adapt to the situation in the last two years [i.e., being a teacher and filmmaker], I was at the beginning of my career, I managed to work in the television for a year and to make a good selection of projects” (E6).

In the case of teaching, a recruitment model based on an invitation based on the professional background of the invitee is a recurring theme. These are not professors or academics, but relevant professionals in their respective fields of work. It is also apparent that the selection of professors are often selected according to do with market criteria, which represents a change between then and now:

in the past, professors were not necessarily script specialists, but today they are, which indicates a certain maturity in the development of the subject area.

“The criteria for selecting teachers often have to do with market realities and through friends. They are like little brotherhoods (...) I looked for specific people for each of the area that I needed. Well, and of course I did not make a regular call regularly to make the selection, but I used the people I knew who were in different areas, in television, in documentaries, in projects...” (E1).

“The demand for people who are truly tested and able to give you the best and who, hopefully, will build up chemistry in just these few courses so that later they can later manage a personal project well” (E6).

It can be observed that screenwriting faculty have different backgrounds in different schools of communication schools and the same small and reduced group of professors teach the same subject. From this it can be deduced that it is a very small group that is always the same and in which all, or at least most of them, know each other.

At this point, it is worth mentioning the differences that the interviewees noted in the teaching of screenwriting at undergraduate and postgraduate level. For example, one of them said that in his experience, undergraduate projects are much looser and freer than graduate projects, as they appreciate the freshness and novelty of such ideas, as opposed to graduate projects where everything is much more rigid and controlled. Perhaps this is because the vast majority of film students want to become directors and not screenwriters.

“At my university you walk into your first class and you see that 90% of the students want to be directors, not screenwriters. They are very afraid to write, they are very afraid to tell their stories, they are embarrassed, they think it is a bit intimidating to present to others something that came from you, something that you have created” (E9).

So there would be less rebelliousness in postgraduate training than in undergraduate training because students at this level understand better understanding of how to put a story together a story, and also because there are professionals are also enrolled who come from other fields, i.e., people who are not directly linked to the audiovisual field, or journalists who do not necessarily know how to write scripts and who are grateful to receive a basic form. These characteristics are reflected in these answers:

“A language lab, which is a short course, there are only six sessions, and it is basically there that I analyze theoretical basics like dialog functions, basic definitions and especially writing” (E7).

“As befits a postgraduate course... the people working in the industry, should be capable people. There were courses like more... also, good directors, producers and I took some of the students from the writing program course, so I had some good screenwriters like” (E6).

Methodology and prevailing trends in the teaching of screenwriting

The topics covered and approaches covered in screenwriting are diverse. This is due to the pedagogical focus and the profile of the teachers. It also depends on the interest shown by the students show in their initial training phase. Some screenwriters interviewed agree that few film students are interested in the subject of screenwriting because they are mainly concerned since what really matters to them is the camera, sound, photography, in short, with the technical elements and not with the story to be told. Youth or immaturity could, according to some, be factors that exacerbate the high failure rates in this subject. Therefore, the evaluation criteria for the construction of the characters, the rhythm, the quality of the story and other elements to be taken into account are new for these future filmmakers.

“Tomorrow you will be directing a movie and if you are given a film and when they give you a script, you need to know whether it works or not. And if you do not read up on the script, how do you know if it’s usable or not? Just because you fell in love with the first picture, how can you know if the rest is not garbage??” (E1).

With regard to the different training opportunities (several universities and different film schools), some of the interviewees stated that they prefer the latter to the former, as they consider them to be more dynamic, open and innovative institutions. In this context, a teacher and screenwriter said:

“ In this sense, the film school is more open in that sense, or rather more innovative” (E1).

As far as education is concerned, several of the interviewees basically refer to the so-called Aristotelian structure as the classical basis for telling a story. It is assumed that, if you know this model is well, you can move on to other, more complex formats. In addition to Aristotle, there are also other, more modern authors or models such as Field, McKee, Egri, or Sieger, among others, who are now considered fundamental classics of screenwriting on a national and international level. This structure taught at film schools is recognized as a model, but at the same time it is open to new forms of filmmaking. An example of this is the following statement:

“There is a pervasive tendency to teach scripture in an almost rigid, orthodox way, based on Aristotelian principles, and that is a good thing (...) there is a tendency to impose a paradigm, the paradigm is used as a pincer” (E2).

There is a tendency to standardize the creative writing process, perhaps because of the industry model and of the screenwriting profession, with its resulting educational requirements.

“After identifying the technical elements that a script must have, there are also some students who realize that there are too many elements or that some things that are duplicated (...) there arises a phenomenon emerges that is believed to be typical of independent cinema or Chilean cinema” (E5).

Although there are always more personalized orientations, as one interviewee says:

“And another example that helps me a lot in the background, namely telling a story well, which is something like a leitmotif... a well-told story is good when this kind of message is placed exactly where it should be, namely at the climax of the story” (E6).

In terms of the theoretical-practical aspects of the process, watching and analyzing films or TV series, studying the respective scripts and their narrative structures and the characters’ backgrounds are common practices. However, a low general cultural level of the students is, however, the main difficulty with these methods. This is confirmed by a screenwriter and teacher:

“At the undergraduate level, the kids don’t read, so they come out of school without reading and no cultural background. They write about their own things; they don’t have no references to make these stories grow. In other words, when a first-year student writes a love story, he tells the story of the neighbors, but he has not read Romero and Juliet, so they do not understand what a higher dimension of love is” (E1).

Training in audiovisual projects

On the basis of the training programs consulted, the conception of audiovisual projects to apply for public funding is developed from a highly empirical perspective. The development of projects that meet the requirements of joint competitive funds (e.g., Corporación de Fomento de la Producción – Corfo and Consejo Nacional de Televisión, for example) is integrated as content in some screenwriting courses and, in others, the screenwriting workshop has been adapted to a Corfo project-like application format. Similarly, the model of the screenwriting residency model privileges the final work according to the nomenclature of applications: Plot and background, complete story, revision,

second draft, proofreading with tutors, dialog. In other words, little theory, and a lot of writing to compete, as these testimonials make clear:

“This is what I do with my students in practice. There is: they do a Corfo, that is what my fiction students of fiction do” (E6).

“Another course what I teach is the Script for Television Fiction Workshop, TV series, which is in the fourth year, first semester, and it is about developing a project, a bible, a step outline, generally a pilot episode of a TV series in the formats established by the call for proposals in Chile, which are usually CNTV and Corfo” (E9).

Residency provides them with a path, but in order to verify whether and how it has an impact, it would be necessary to follow up on the projects. In this regard, one interviewee said:

“There the projects are also presented with a trajectory, because the students were in residence, we have to see how the jury evaluates them, whether they evaluate them negatively or positively (...) this allows us to develop a management and follow-up system” (E3).

This obsession with the format, with the requirements of competitive means, is expressed by a professor of screenwriting and dramaturgy in film or theater, respectively:

“It is different when we teach it here in the theater than when I teach it in the audiovisual field. In the audiovisual field, it sometimes, there seems to me that too much emphasis is placed on the format, and the formats are more changeable” (E5).

The script in the audiovisual industry

There is a consensus that in Chile there is no audiovisual industry as such in Chile and that the small size of the market hinders its development (Peirano & Gobantes, 2014; Horta, 2013). The export volumes of audiovisual products are not sufficient to speak of an industry. At the international level, the demand for high-quality screenplays exceeds the supply. Most interviewees point to the need to improve the quality of scripts and screenwriters and to update the themes in order to compete internationally.

“There are a lot of things that are missing, but from a screenplay perspective, I understand that what is missing is working on the scripts from a commercial perspective, from a marketing perspective, knowing that your movie is not necessarily going to be a blockbuster” (E3).

The reasons can be found in history. The origin of the audiovisual industry in Chile is linked to advertising, which facilitated access to resources before there were public policies to promote the audiovisual industry. From the interviews, it appears that it is a small market with few agents, so there is little competition among them, which encourages improvement. The industry tends to hire young screenwriters because they are cheaper, not because they are better. At least that's the conclusion that emerges from listening to some of the testimonials:

“ Our industry is not really an industry; there are very few people who can make a living from TV, from writing for TV, there are not that many. It is not really an industry “ (E5).

“I don't know anyone who works full-time as a screenwriter for series in Chile. I don't know. If you do know, give me the recipe on how to do it” (E10).

Their lack of experience has a negative impact on the quality of production. The stability of jobs is a parameter by which the existence of an industry can be measured. There are capable professionals with good training, but there is no industry in which professionals can develop, so many emigrate or export their work. There is evidence tells us that the profession of screenwriter in Chile being a screenwriter is not a full-time occupation and that the productive age of screenwriters usually ends before the age of 50. This perception is compounded by the fact that screenwriting is a discipline that is considered secondary to the technical fields and that the development process requires time that is not available. There is a lack of a common language in which the production and content departments of television channels can communicate with directors and scriptwriters. For one group of interviewees, the level of professionalism of scriptwriters is low.

“There is a problem with the narrative in general, not just in the audiovisual realm. We are good poets, *payadores*, chroniclers, columnists, there is all kinds of talent. But the time travel, i.e., telling a story, is difficult. I think it has to do with basic education, with the way in which Chileans study and learn our history, which we do not know because it is so badly written that you cannot remember it, it has no characters or epicness” (E8).

For others, the solution is to research the audience to give them with relevance, to find out what their dilemmas are. So it seems that the industry needs to take care of the commercial aspects of the script and stop blaming the screenwriters for the mediocrity of the audiovisual production, as they need to limit themselves to the commercial viability of the script. This is also explained by the fact that local television is resistant to change, which hinders innovation. New transmedia

content channels, video games and other fragmented narratives open up an opportunity for renewal.

Institutional framework for State support of projects

The lack of a film industry and private investors puts the audiovisual sector in a situation of dependence on public funding. The problem arises precisely because it is a very small sector: anonymity in the selection of projects is important in order to maintain impartiality.

“It is a repeated request of the evaluators, especially from the Council, but not so in Corfo, because there they come with anonymity to the last moment, that anonymity is important, it is very important to be as fair as possible... anonymity is very important” (E2).

Among the instruments that have helped to promote film production is the law to promote the audiovisual sector, which even finances the writing of screenplays and enables 40 to 50 films to be produced in Chile every year, five or six of which are shown at festivals. Other State aid comes from the National Television Council (CNTV, by its Spanish acronym) to produce both mass and niche content. In both cases, the feedback provided by the evaluation of the competition funds is appreciated by the filmmakers.

They agree that the evaluation processes have improved and that the impact of influencer networks of influence has been reduced. However, filmmakers from smaller regions are annoyed by the greater access to the contact networks of contacts of filmmakers from the capital pre-production phase in the capital or larger regions such as Valparaíso. The same criticism is directed at public funding for the production of television series. The instruments for developing the industry favor productions for a mass audience or experimental themes, so that productions that do not fit into one of these extremes are neglected. Another criticism relates to the slowness of the process.

“The funding appeals are essential in the case of television. We are all here to apply, and again, the applications are slow, for a jury to read them and to say, hey, I think your project is good and you know, I will give you the money to write it or do this” (E10).

In this context, some interviewees point to the need for differentiated conditions for established and emerging filmmakers, with measures to support the latter.

Regarding the specific funds and their improvements, the impression is a perception that the Audiovisual Promotion Fund gives great importance to the screenplay and that, as a developing instrument, it is linked to other public policy

instruments as an evolving tool to address both the process of production and distribution process.

Finally, we could conclude from the interviews we were able to infer that in Chile the work of the script analyst or consultant is still not yet very developed, but only that of the tutor, which is always limited to the academic environment. In many cases, college graduates turn to their former professors to help them as script analysts on their own audiovisual projects when they apply for competition funds.

The working conditions of the sector

The cliché says that it is difficult to make it as a screenwriter because the environment is very demanding. The reasons for this have already been outlined in the previous sections: a weak audiovisual industry that does not guarantee full-time working conditions - except in the best days of the soap opera, but with fixed-term contracts, the prevailing competition that requires screenwriters to write with the aim of selling something, and methodological difficulties.

“It is not as if they opened the doors for you to become a screenwriter on a soap opera. It’s hard to find a place there (...) You have to have a lot of luck or a lot of talent or both things together” (E4).

“If I had to polish a rough diamond or a student, the focus for me would be on research, starting of course with the facts, of course. You cannot write *Narcos* without thoroughly researching the world of drug trafficking and so on with millions of examples we can give” (E6).

The interviewees agree that the core of a screenwriter’s job is to tell stories, regardless of the model followed. Therefore, screenwriting requires narrative craft and methodology, as well as a great ability to research. It is not enough for a story to be entertaining, well thought out and well written. It must have a goal that can be shared with the production team. This is where the importance of the role of the executive producer becomes clear (especially in television). Chile follows the North American model, where the executive producer is the one who gives context to the series product. A few television scriptwriters tell us:

“The gringos have it clear on TV, because the one who knows what is going to happen in episodes 3, 7 and 20... the show, that is, they have a producer and they change directors, they change directors a lot... Director is a technical position...” (E6).

“I’ve been a crew chief for six, seven years, there are as many methods as there are crew chiefs, in that sense it is super irregular in that sense, it’s not a thing like you can say there is only one method or one method only.

There are screenwriters who work, I don't know, who do everything. There are others who just scale and the rest are dialogists, there are different types, there are screenwriters, I for example, am a bit more democratic in some things, horizontal" (E7).

In this sense, the professionalization of screenwriting goes hand in hand with television. It is periodicity and teamwork that make these demands. While in the United States the teams consider specialists for every aspect of the script, in Chile the script assistant screenwriter combines many specialties: dialogues, scripts, scales. This is due to the non-existence of an industry as such.

"A screenplay assistant should be the one you send the step outline to, and the assistant should format it, put in the numbers, put in the hours, see the continuities, realize that here it was day one here and here it was day five here, then someone jumps five days, puts in the periods. More practical things, but also concrete in the sense that when you write as a screenwriter you don't pay attention to those details when you're writing. So, that should be a script assistant who supports the screenwriter" (E4).

There is a gap in the professionalization and specialization of screenwriters that makes it difficult to build professional teams at a good level. Screenwriters of any genre need specific skills, but it is inconvenient for them to specialize because there is little room for professional development as a specialist and the work is undervalued.

CONCLUSIONS

Using a semi-structured interview as a research tool, the participants have provided an identity discourse about an activity in which forms of relationship between the screenwriter and the rest of the chain of audiovisual production chain are discussed. There is a consensus that screenwriters must have their own vision on important topics such as life or society to have something to tell, and, in order to tell a story, and that they pre-production stage must master the technique in the pre-production phase in order to translate this knowledge into a screenplay. It is pointed out, for example, that there are people without academic training who have made very good films. On this premise, having a degree helps achieve one of the two things, it speeds up the process, but it is insufficient if there is a lack of discipline and rigor. This explains why, as screenwriting teachers, and based on their own creative filmmaking experience in making, they encourage the use of practical teaching/learning methods rather than just theoretical lessons, such as watching and then analyzing films or television series.

On the other hand, the interviewees confirm that the working methodology is not standardized and the industry is still in its infancy, especially in television, where each broadcaster and scriptwriter has their own method. This is confirmed by the collective nature of the work, where each team can have four or more members. Some of them prefer to work in different rooms from the rest of the production to encourage creativity and concentration during the initial work of creating the document before writing the episoded (also known as the “bible”). This is in contrast to screenwriters on feature films, whose job is more focused on the writer from the beginning and, therefore, less collective until the end.

In short, the screenwriting profession is one of the least developed jobs in the entire audiovisual industry, which is becoming increasingly demanding and competitive. In addition to the diversity of professional origins, the relative insecurity of the work in this sector stands out, which manifests itself in the fixed-term contracts for projects that are strung together in successive contracts, interspersed with periods off work, and combined, in many cases combined with teaching or applying for public funding projects for audiovisual production. In fact, the screenwriter’s experience is considered very important in the context of the creative industry, a path that is facilitated by the improvement or self-study to compensate for the gaps in basic training. Despite this observation, none of the interviewees claimed to be able to make a living from screenwriting alone.

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