

Exploring the lives of Hispanic migrants living in the UK: social, linguistic, and cultural integration

Research-based justification and description of the documentary

The initial proposal of my research project was to create an audio documentary that focuses on Latin American migrants living in the UK. I was particularly interested in gaining a deeper knowledge and understanding of their lives to share with the British public. I considered the research results could be valuable for those who may be unaware of this small population living in their home country. However, as the process developed, I decided not to restrict my sample to only Latin Americans, and to reduce limitations, it was more beneficial to use interviews conducted by myself and those extracted from HumBox. These specific interviews were published online by former University of Leeds students for academic purposes. They were administered at the university during the academic year 2015/16 with Spanish migrants living in the UK at that time. This method allowed me to collect more substantial data for my final documentary and to explore both the positive experiences and the challenges faced by a variety of native Spanish speakers. Through the documentary, I wanted to promote cultural diversity and provide an insight into the lives of this specific group of foreign nationals. The piece is aimed at English-speakers who have limited information on this topic. Therefore, the style of writing I have incorporated some advanced vocabulary but fundamentally the documentary contains accessible language, aimed at an audience with no prior knowledge on the topic of migration and integration. The documentary is suitable for individuals with a medium-high educational level, for example students in higher education or working professionals.

I chose to use an oral history methodology for the interviews because it allowed more freedom for the participants to speak willingly and openly. Furthermore, it did not restrict the amount of questions and answers, and the information gathered captured the real and unique life experiences of my participants. Their testimonies enabled me to keep an open mind about what topics and issues I wanted to discuss in my documentary. Not only did they have the freedom to speak about what they wanted but it also gave me the opportunity to be flexible about the focus of my project. I knew I wanted to explore the different dimensions of integration: the psychological and the cultural. Furthermore, I specifically hoped I could investigate elements such as language learning, cultural awareness, and intercultural

relationships.

In a conceptual survey on immigration (2003, Castles et al) it was suggested that although an issue of major importance within many fields, there is no actual consensus regarding the definition of integration but it is in fact a “two way” process involving both the newcomer and receiving society (117.) I wanted to explore the theories behind this concept; in what ways did my participants feel integrated, what integration meant to them, and in what ways they feel they have integrated in their new society. Finally, how the people of the UK as a host country have played in this reciprocal process. Yang (2017) also relates to this understanding of integration. Based on in-depth interview data, the research investigates the ways in which international students from China studying at a Singaporean university comprehend the idea of ‘integration.’ They found an essential indicator of successful integration is friendship, placing a strong emphasis on social life and social networks. This study found many of the interviewees thought it was impossible to fully ‘assimilate’ with only superficial friendships and that interaction was limited due to the language barrier. Without the use of certain etiquettes, social norms and personal humour it is difficult to communicate effectively and limits migrants’ ability to participate in and comprehend certain matters. Using my own and the HumBox interviews, I wanted to discover if UK foreign residents have had parallel experiences, and if the friendships formed have been affected by these factors.

In her study of Latin Americans in London, Ana Lucila Granada (2013) emphasises the symbolic power of language and its strong link to identity and integration. I wanted to progress this idea in my documentary to identify if my participants found their English language abilities have affected their ability to ‘integrate’ and identify with being British. Granada also states that not only does language connect people but also raises barriers between them. I hoped to examine whether the migrants featured in my documentary have experienced these difficulties and how they have been affected. I hoped to determine whether language has played a huge role in social progression or, alternatively, caused a certain degree of linguistic and cultural segregation. In her 2012 study, Cathy McIwaine researched the lives of Colombians living in the UK and found an overwhelming number identified their lack of English language skills as a main problem and consequently, has been the reason they had been moved from highly regarded professional backgrounds in their home country to a

lower status job when arriving to the UK. Similarly, Carlisle (2006) describes it as vicious circle because the only jobs available to non-English speakers are 'hidden jobs' which offer little opportunity to socialise with other English speakers. He states: 'the level of skills, education or professional experience gained outside of the UK is virtually irrelevant.' (p.239) I hoped to find comparable case studies amongst the working lives of my participants and whether their professional careers have been undermined due to their English language skills. Alternatively, McIwaine's report discusses the issue of marginalisation and how it is can be dependent on certain attitudes. Non-native individuals who spoke fluent English claimed that their fellow colleagues who were not at the same level 'would close themselves and only go places where they would find other Latinos.' (p.37, McIwaine) By finding a range of participants with varying English language abilities, I wanted to compare similar findings in my documentary and explore to what extent 'willingness' plays a role as opposed to 'ability' and how the two interject to help shape the foreign experience.

Rosa Mas Giralt has carried out a case study of Latin American families living in the North of England, after stating that this information has been difficult to obtain outside of London. Her findings focused on the group's current lack of presence in public consciousness as well as the difficulties they encounter with economic and cultural adaptation. This cultural aspect links to my project but my sampling is from working individuals or students rather than families.

I have been particularly interested in the work of acculturation theorist John Berry, whose concepts link to my documentary and enabled me to further my knowledge on the topic. He believes integration is defined when an acculturating group participates in their host culture whilst maintaining values of their own 'root' culture. He highlights however that it is dependent on social and personal variables (1997). Berry (2011) implied not all groups of a 'plural society' seek to engage in intercultural relations and that there is a general negative attitude towards having contact with members from other ethnocultural groups. The term separation refers to those who prefer to maintain their cultural identity and avoid interaction with others. He relates integration to a maintained interest in both one's original culture as well as daily interactions with other groups, participating as an integral part of the larger society. It will be interesting to discover if my participants have experienced any similar issues with their relationships with host nationals in the United Kingdom. Berry (2011) also

expressed that for successful integration to be achieved, the dominant society must be open to cultural diversity and that non-dominant groups must adopt the basic values of the larger society and engage with them. Berry examines 'acculturative stress' and 'acculturative strategies' which relate to the problems migrants face in a new country, and what solutions can help with these issues. Some examples of these 'acculturation strategies' are language knowledge use, peer relations and family relationship values. I hoped to learn about the specific experiences of my participants in relation to these strategies, with an emphasis on language knowledge use and how English language acquisition has affected their integration process. Through using a small sample of Hispanic individuals, I was able to explore and obtain a better understanding of the above issues.

In a contrasting study on politeness Orta (1995) focuses on the cross-cultural pragmatics between England and Spain. He highlights the problems native speakers encounter with the expression of politeness and how the lack of 'pragmatic equivalence' between the two parties can lead to the inability to convey their intentions in the target language. He discusses research that explores the universal principles of cooperation and politeness. This phenomenon is a topic I was extremely interested in and wanted to discuss further in my documentary. With evidence from both mine and the HumBox interviews I was able to focus on the different interactional styles of both Spanish and English and how they have led to some conversational misinterpretations. I have also incorporated the theories of Edward T. Hall (1976) within this section and the definitions of 'high and low context culture.'

Finally, there has been a rapid influx of Spanish speaking migrants since the 1990s in the UK; many as permanent working residents and students studying for Bachelors, Masters or PhD degrees. Many studies have highlighted the perspectives of migrants and international students and if they perceive themselves to be an integral part of their new host society. However, since integration is multidimensional, there are many different aspects to consider and in my documentary, I explored the themes relating to the concepts of integration such as language, relationships, and identity.

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OPENLIVES Project at The University of Leeds

**Documentary Title: Exploring the lives of Hispanic migrants living in the UK:
social, linguistic, and cultural integration**

Narrator: Hello everyone, Hola a todos, and, ¡Bienvenido! Welcome. This documentary is part of the OPENLIVES project at the University of Leeds. My name is Daisy Willock and I am a current student reading Spanish language in my final year at Leeds University.

Recently, I have returned from spending a year abroad in Colombia, a country that was completely foreign to me with a different language and culture. Needless to say, I had a fantastic experience and the challenges I faced have certainly helped to improve both my confidence and language ability. And therefore, since returning home, I have developed a greater interest and curiosity for the newcomers from other countries who have come to live, work or study in my home country, the United Kingdom. Do we ever stop to consider the lives and experiences of these people? Do we know anything about them and the challenges they have faced? And finally, do they feel they have successfully integrated into their host society? The UK is no exception amongst the many countries affected by globalisation. We have a high level of sustained migration as well as many students from around the world who have chosen to come and study at some of the top British universities. In this documentary, we will focus on the topic of integration and intercultural relationships by exploring the life stories of adult migrants from Spain and Latin America who currently live here in the UK. From PhD students from Chile to young professionals from Spain, we will hear it from their perspective: how they define and perceive their levels of integration and how language and cultural awareness has affected this process. We hope to answer some of the following questions. How has the challenge of second language learning affected their experience and daily interactions? What cultural differences have they noticed and if they have had an impact? And finally, have the British people welcomed them into society allowing friendships to be formed, or, is there still a communication and cultural barrier? This documentary will delve deeper into the lives of these individuals who have made this cultural and linguistic border crossing. We will hear first-hand accounts of the real emotions and issues faced as a Hispanic migrant living in the UK today.

Gisela: (English voice-over) Sí para mí sí, claro. Integración, sí. Sí, para mí es totalmente importante porque es que sino... o sea, no puedes irte a un sitio a vivir sin involucrarte en la cultura y sin intentar entender, si no, ¿para qué vas? ¿Solo para trabajar?

Narrator: Before we begin, how do we define *integration* and how important is it? It is a concept that has been discussed and debated for years yet still to this day, one exact definition does not suffice. Research-based data has been gathered from studies all around the world regarding the meaning of integration. However, we still don't have the answer! Nowadays, the definition is usually left open because it tends to vary from country to country and is often based on different variables. Integration can be measured by several elements, however, today we are focusing on how our participants perceive it in terms of social and cultural adaptation to their new society. From first-hand accounts from our native Spanish speaking interviewees, we have discovered that it is the interaction between the newcomer and host that leads to a more successful course of integration. In this documentary, we will discuss the reasons for this by touching on themes such as language proficiency and cultural awareness. How do these two elements either encourage or inhibit the process? When both parties can communicate effectively as well as understand and appreciate one another's cultural differences, an essential social network can be formed. This is imperative for a successful integration process.

Narrator: Let us first look at the power of language and how it has played a significant role in the experiences of our Hispanic migrants living in the UK today. Language is not only the main function that allows us to communicate and interact daily, but it also lets us express our thoughts and emotions. Therefore, it is no surprise that throughout our interviews with native Spanish speakers, their issues with the English language was mentioned as the most common problem. To be proficient in the English language is one of the key skills that migrants must acquire to ensure they experience an effective and positive integration process. According to the EU Immigrant Integration Policy adopted in 2004, basic knowledge of the host society's language is essential for this process. Subsequently, a level higher than basic is required and in order to meet social and economic demands, textbook English taught in the classroom is not enough. However, learning a language is much harder than it may appear to a native speaker. Although migrants with a basic level of English can have short and social

conversations, commonly known as ‘small talk’, they cannot fully engage with members of their host community. This type of interaction only requires simple and direct exchanges of information on familiar topics. Learning English at this basic level alone is challenging but there are other vital parts of language learning that are not taught in the classroom but are still important. Overcoming these challenges can turn the short and superficial exchanges into fluid conversations. Firstly, there is the challenge of communicating in any context or social situation. Then, there is the ability to express both complex thoughts and emotions. Both these aspects of language are vital for successful interaction. Additionally, to be able to show personal traits through language as well as understand different accents and colloquialisms are also important factors that can enhance these fluid and more advanced interactions. We will look at these examples further throughout the documentary.

Narrator: Although English taught in the classroom is useful, if you are simply filling in blanks of a grammar textbook, you cannot develop an identity or personality in this second language. Students may be taught the formalities of the language but this may not translate when put into a practical situation. Without these specific language skills, there may be some communication problems.

***Gisela: (English voice-over)** Bueno era duro, claro, era la primera vez me iba de casa porque nunca había vivido fuera de casa, ni siquiera en España, o sea, me iba de casa y encima me iba fuera a un país extranjero donde hablaban otra lengua, que yo cuando llegué pensaba que sabía hablar inglés, pero cuando llegué aquí dije: ‘no, no sé hablar inglés’, porque encima en Liverpool, no entendía a nadie, me costó un poco.*

***Javier: (English voice-over)** Pues... bueno, a ver, a mí la sensación que me da, personal, eh, la sensación personal, es que los ingleses son, no sé, es muy difícil contactar con ellos. Aquí cuando tú sales, vale... los cinco primeros minutos que tú tienes contacto con un inglés son muy bonitos “¿Ah que tal? ¡Qué bien! ¿Cómo estás? ¡Ah eres de España, me gusta España!” y tal, y tal, pero cuando pasan cinco minutos, parece que... bueno... “tú sigues tu camino, yo lo mío”. Yo veo un poco de diferencia ahí, aquí,*

Narrator: Generally, the problem that may occur between a host national and foreign language learner is that social interactions can fall short. They can also tend to lack sentiment and character. Consequently, communication is limited and often impersonal. Conversing in a

second language slows down the thinking process and makes the exchanges less spontaneous and natural. Likewise, certain accents or dialects, like the Liverpudlian accent in Gisela's case, can be almost impossible to understand for a non-native speaker. Language learners can feel vulnerable or self-conscious in these kinds of social situations, especially for migrants moving to the UK for the first time, with little or no previous knowledge of English. In Javier's case, the lack of language knowledge may well be the reason for his limited conversations, however, it is possible that he is articulating a deeper frustration with regards to the cultural conceptions and contrast between the UK and Spain. This issue relating to culture is a topic we will discuss later.

As we have already mentioned, there are many linguistic challenges to overcome as a language learner but above all, grasping a whole new vocabulary is the first demand. In comparison to English, the Spanish language has many contrasting features, for example; opposite grammatical patterns, unfamiliar phonetics, and different sentence structures. However, these elements are minor because essentially, if the words themselves have not been learnt, no form of conversation can proceed.

Gisela: (English voice-over) *A veces si hablo de algo muy profundo, pues eso me cuesta porque no tengo el vocabulario.*

Narrator: The understanding and use of vocabulary is an essential part of foreign language learning. The lack of this knowledge can lead to stunted communication as well as the inability to express feelings and thoughts. Considering that the average native speaker has an active vocabulary of 18,000 to 20,000 words and a passive vocabulary at an additional 15,000 to 20,000 words, it is no wonder that foreign language speakers have more trouble expressing themselves in the target language. Plus, we all are constantly learning new words as individuals every day. Therefore, for foreign language learners, this constant influx of new words and meanings can be both extremely confusing and frustrating. As a language learner myself, I know and understand this feeling, and it can certainly lead to a lack of confidence. Consequently, these emotions prevent at times, any form of linguistic interaction.

Abraham: (English voice-over) *Sobre todo de comunicación, en el restaurante, había un chico que sí hablaba... el chico argentino hablaba español pero con el resto no me*

comunicaba, era muy difícil, y quieres, yo soy una persona social, muy social y me gusta comunicarme con la gente. Y la lengua ¿no? una barrera muy importante, de comunicación, incluso yo no me sentía capaz de hablar con la gente porque me daba miedo digo: “es que no voy a entenderme, le voy a hacer perder quince minutos solo para entender una frase”. Muchas veces no decía nada.

Narrator: This experience recorded by one of our Hispanic participants emphasises these concerns. Moving to a new country with little knowledge of the native language can seriously affect the self-esteem and confidence levels. A common issue faced is known as foreign language anxiety and is often apparent amongst new language learners. In this instance, Abraham feels apprehensive and nervous to converse naturally because it takes him longer to understand the words. He also has the fear of being judged if he makes a mistake and that his ability will be negatively viewed. This often can affect migrant’s levels of participation and consequently leads to less contact between the newcomer and host. We must remember that conversational languages are fast-paced and often colloquialisms are used, which makes understanding and contributing even harder. Adults are more likely to keep quiet and say nothing rather than feel embarrassed if they incorrectly pronounce or forget a word. By avoiding failure, it is in fact limiting and affecting the integration process by restricting the opportunity to socialise. Additionally, there is the issue of not being able to fully ‘be themselves’ and show their real personalities in the host language. As a result, it is not a real representation of the kind of person they are:

Gisela: (English voice-over) *De hecho, creo que cuando hablo inglés, pues una persona inglesa no puede llegar a conocerme realmente porque no me puedo expresar igual que me expreso en castellano.*

Paulina: *Since you meet someone it’s like okay ...it’s very fluid but here its always...you need to break a wall first you know and ...also because you don’t know which way to... you know it’s a little bit different. Also, I think that personally I’m a different person with English and Spanish, because I can’t communicate as well or it’s not the same.*

Narrator: Research suggests our personalities change when alternating between two languages. This may be due to many factors. Firstly, the most obvious, as previously

discussed, the lack of language knowledge. Especially for new learners, in an environment where they are expected to speak a good level of English, it is easy to adopt a cautious and timid persona. This is especially if they don't feel like they have the capability or confidence to interact effectively. It is often the case that non-natives are more assertive and humorous in their native language. Personality can be expressed in language through spontaneity and good humour: two of the hardest skills to achieve for learners, yet an essential part of social interaction. Yet there are different conceptions of humour dependent on the language. A migrant who is considered funny amongst their friends back home could join a new group in their host country who reject and misunderstand their comedy. Similarly, it can be frustrating if everyone is laughing at a joke, but they cannot understand because they are not familiar with certain colloquialisms.

Abraham: *(English voice-over)* Y en Yorkshire, todavía más difícil. [Risas] Fue muy complicado, fueron... yo creo que estuve un año aquí que no entendía a nadie, era muy difícil.

Mario: *I also had a quite English, a very Mancunian experience. I managed to get a job in a little factory, it was a little company they produced ice cubes for bars and pubs...so I operated big machinery and it was a very physical thing you know...and I got in touch with proper English working class people you know... and then I learnt some Mancunian expressions!*

Narrator: Slangs and expressions are especially unavoidable in any language and they differ depending on what region they are used. Slangs can be a strong indicator of someone's personality. A Spanish speaker in England cannot express his or her personality with typically British slang because that would not fit in with their Hispanic identity. The English language also has many idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms that make no sense at all to language learners, even at an advanced level. The British also have a taste for sarcasm and irony, so sometimes it is hard to know what conversations are serious or if there is an underlying joke. Overcoming these challenges are key in becoming confident enough to understand, join in with jokes and socialise with native English speakers.

Paula: *(English-voice-over)* Cuando eres nuevo, buscas un poco lo que más se te asemeja a

ti. Tampoco es que te involucres mucho en la cultura, aunque lo intentes. No es tan fácil. Porque además como tampoco puedes hacer amistades inglesas sin inglés... Y al final terminas celebrando siempre las cosas españolas porque al final conoces a españoles aunque no quieras, aunque vengas pensando... No voy a conocer a tantos españoles, pues al final si

Paulina: *But honestly, it's difficult to identify myself as a British you know... because first of all, English is not my first language as I said and it is a different culture so if I'm honest with you I identify more with Spanish people. As I said I think that normally when you live abroad you have more foreign friends."*

Narrator: Friendship provides an important basis and emotional support network which in turn contributes to better social and cultural integration. Clearly the formation and development of friendships are identified as an important part of integration for migrants. However, establishing networks far from home and adjusting to a new culture and lifestyle requires both effort and patience. Many of our Spanish speakers have highlighted the role of language on their relationships and how it has inhibited their opportunity to form strong connections. Successful communication not only helps to create friendships but also to sustain them. Therefore, we often see groups of international migrants socialising with others that share their common language.

Paulina: *"I think it's a good thing if you can integrate into the society you know. I feel like I would have liked to be more into the British society you know and I'm still open to that option actually...you know... I know neighbours as I said I know them but sometimes it's difficult to get more on that you know...it's like... it's not as easy if you have other friends."*

Narrator: The lack of language ability or cultural awareness can hinder migrants from making real friendships with host nationals. This may be because they cannot express themselves how they would in typical social situations in their home country. Primarily, interpersonal jokes are significant when trying to form a strong friendship with another person. An individual may be witty, relaxed, and confident in Spanish but when attempting to speak English, they are much more reserved. The transition overseas may be much more challenging than expected therefore befriending those with whom they can relate to and share the same language can be a reassurance. It could also be helpful to discuss certain issues with

fellow non-natives who are experiencing the same problems. Moving to a new country can be lonely at times. It is typical to feel homesick and to want the comfort of your own language with people who share that common ground. Unfortunately, intercultural friendships can often be labelled as more superficial because the lack of language knowledge can inhibit a stronger bond to be formed.

Narrator: However, there are also many individuals who have arrived in the United Kingdom and their perceptions have been constructed in different ways:

***Mario:** We have had a really nice time during the Masters, it was lovely, and my wife got in touch with a lot of parents in Headingley and people living the same thing. We got in touch with the British society, you know with the good and the bad things of British society, but mainly with the good things in terms of...because many people approached us to say “Where are you from?” “Wow are you tourists?” “You speak Spanish yes wow!” ...and well then, we made very good friends...at least to share our sorrows with like my baby is not sleeping, you know?”*

***Anonymous:** Yes in general, it’s very positive, I felt very welcome during that time I had a very good experience because in this University of Manchester they have an international Society which ran activities for international students. One of those activities was that basically they realised that many international students come and never get to know like the British culture because they just share with other international students and leave... so they made an alliance with the Rotary Club. So, they have voluntary families who wanted to welcome students into their home so basically, they make you fill a form like what kind of things do you like to do, what topics do you like talking about things, what are your hobbies etc.*

Narrator: We have listened to conflicting perceptions of Hispanic adult migrants with regards to intercultural relationships. This leads us to wonder, has their environment played a part in the forming of friendships during their social integration process? Areas with a high University population are a prime location for intercultural contact, especially as the UK is thriving with international students. Mario, a Phd student, for example feels very comfortable and content with his life in the UK, whereas Paulina, a mother of two working from home,

does not feel 100% integrated.

Paulina: *“If I’m honest with you one of my main problems here is that almost all my friends are from Spain and...I’m always speaking in Spanish. I talk Spanish with my children because I want them to be bilingual... which they are. So, I always talk to them in Spanish, I talk to my husband in Spanish because I met him in Mexico and we started in Spanish you know...and then I talk in Spanish to my friends here so... maybe that’s why my English is not as good as it should be... so I think that one of the main problems, even if my husband is English and yes, his family are English and they are very nice people you know, but I still don’t feel 100% integrated.”*

Narrator: The integration process can be slowed down and ineffective if migrants remain comfortable in their exclusive groups and don’t take the opportunity to interact in English. This can prevent the development of effectively building networks between the newcomer and the receiving group, which in turn will contribute to a more cohesive society. However, circumstances vary according to the person and it is not always an easy task to step out of your comfort zone and socialize with others in an unfamiliar environment. This is especially the case with Paulina. She has a busy family life in which she has always spoken in her native tongue for various reasons, plus she lives in a smaller, closed community where it may not be as easy to go out and make new friends. On the other hand, for Mario, making friends with members of his host community was much more achievable because he is a student surrounded by the multicultural and busy environment that is university.

Narrator: Integration is not just about language, but also how it relates to context and culture. In other words, how and when we use the words that we know. The type of language we use may vary according to the social situation we are in. These are skills we have learnt in our native tongue from a young age, therefore our ‘cultural etiquette’ is naturally used in our day to day interactions. Subconsciously, the words we speak have been influenced by the culture we have grown up with. Every language is unique and has its own components that have been constructed over time. Therefore, every community has its own way of communicating. For example, some may say that in the UK, our stereotyped ‘British etiquette’ or the reason we use very polite language is because we have always been a reserved country with a class society, where good manners are considered the norm. For a

non-native, acquiring English as a second language comes with more challenges and frustrations than we realise. This challenge is to not only understand the words and how they are formed but also the cultural contexts within. In the case of the experiences of our Hispanic migrants in the UK, they identified a cultural barrier caused by the contrast in the Spanish way of being very direct and the indirectness of the British people.

Gisela: (English voice-over) *Yo como soy española, soy muy directa, entonces a veces, no quiero ofender, pero a veces sin querer es como que digo: 'ay, no sé si estoy ofendiendo o no', entonces siempre estoy como que no puedo ser natural porque no sé si... si...*

Narrator: Pragmatic failures, otherwise known as miscommunication, are extremely common in native and non-native interactions. Many of our Spanish speaking migrants, like Gisela, have been a victim of this miscommunication. The difficulties that occur within intercultural communication are caused by several factors. In this case, ambiguity of the English language can be determined by its specific communication style; this can be either high or low context culture. These concepts define how two conflicting cultures may perceive a similar message in a different way. This happens because of the different communication strategies and specific rules of social interaction within cultures. Being aware of these rules leads to better comprehension and fewer misunderstandings, however this usually takes time and can be very difficult for a newcomer. Some aspects of British culture are considered high context because there are explicit rules with regards to politeness. This makes it difficult for Spanish speakers to navigate because it is not applicable in their language. Whilst British speakers often rely on facial expressions and tone of voice to convey a message, Spanish cultures are more direct. This Spanish 'directness' is an example of why it is considered a lower context culture, as this is a principal factor of this concept. In other words, the Spanish are more likely to express their intentions in a direct and honest fashion whilst the English are more reserved and may not say it 'how it is.' English is therefore more ambiguous and often foreigners aren't sure what is appropriate or what could be considered offensive. As mentioned by Gisela, there are different expectations with regards to the appropriateness of the English language. Therefore, English methods of communicating may not necessarily coincide with Spanish speakers, which can lead to some conversational issues:

Alba: (English voice-over) *Yo no sé hablar inglés. Porque vienes con nivel de colegio. Y claro, te plantas en una cafetería y dices 'I want a coffee'. Claro, yo quiero un café. Lo transcribes a tu lengua, y puede ser un poco 'rude'. Quiero un café, I would like a coffee. Son contextos de las lenguas que tú no dominas porque no lo has practicado, y yo no había hablado con ningún inglés*

Narrator: Alba is confident in her knowledge of English, but she thinks that to be able to assimilate successfully it isn't just a case of learning the language but also adopting certain cultural mannerisms. It is a huge challenge to be able use the words in the correct form and context so that it sounds natural and isn't be perceived in the wrong way. There is bound to be a lack of cultural awareness for newcomers when they first arrive in their host country. Certain mannerisms that may come natural to us are completely foreign to newcomers. Understandably, this can lead to confusion and frustration which in turn limits communication and causes a social and a cultural barrier. Of course, nobody wants to come across as rude or insensitive but unfortunately this barrier may cause such problems. As Alba mentioned, literal translations don't always work. In Spanish, the use of the imperative is used in normal contexts as a way of expressing a request or command. Sometimes the use of 'por favor' (please) isn't even necessary. On the other hand, in English, we tend to use the conditional 'I would like' instead of the imperative which would translate better to 'Give me that' In the UK, our communication style is based around our specific understanding of etiquette that ensures our requests and commands are polite and we always say our pleases and thank-yous! This does not necessarily mean that the British are 'more polite', but that is the way our language has evolved and been influenced by culture. For Spanish speakers, the idea of apologising for everything and saying please and thank you at every stage of a meal in a restaurant, may seem strange.

Paulina: *Well I think that... first of all... well the language is always something you know but I think that more than the language is the communication code behind it you know? I think that is related to a culture more than anything. I understand that obviously, I am in a country, I need to do things and I need to follow the rules in that country but sometimes it is difficult to understand that."*

Javier: (English voice-over) *En España nosotros intentamos, pues, quedar más veces o "A*

ver si nos vemos, nos tomamos otra caña... ” Podemos seguir... no hace falta ser una relación íntima, pero bueno, quedar de vez en cuando y tal. Yo veo un poco de diferencia aquí, yo creo que los ingleses son, sois, un poco más independientes.

Mario: *Yes because they are Latin people...because they are open to invite you at home for example. So, these are the kinds of things that is difficult to... obtain from an English person you know, they are more... reluctant to open their private lives.... which is okay it is a different culture.*

Narrator: It is impossible to name the many cultural differences that exist between Spain, Latin America and the UK. Different attitudes and character traits are influenced by culture instilled from a young age. In comparison to the social norms that Javier and Mario are used to in their countries, they perceive the British people to be more superficial and less accessible to communicate with. In order to achieve successful ‘integration’ there has to be a mutual understanding and appreciation of each other’s’ cultures. However, it is hard if one culture is more open than the other. The best way to consolidate these issues is by looking at the two different forms of greetings in Latin and British cultures. In Spain for example, it is typical for acquaintances of both genders to embrace, and often two females or a male and female will kiss each other on each cheek. In Britain, handshakes are the norm, whereas kisses and hugs are usually reserved between very good friends. This is just one example that emphasises the cultural difference with regards to the direct and openness of Spanish speakers and the indirectness of the British. In addition to this, there may be more aspects of a migrant’s cultural identity that they feel is lacking in their new society:

Gisela: (English voice-over) *Yo, en Barcelona, mi grupo de amigos son todos músicos y entonces tocan... rumba, catalana, o flamenco y cosas así y entonces, pues eso aquí no. No lo tengo.*

Narrator: Certain elements of Hispanic culture, such as music or dance play a huge part in creating a social life and maintaining a cultural identity. It is important that migrants remember their backgrounds and heritage when immersing themselves into UK culture. Likewise, nationals also must be open to these elements of cultural diversity and respect the differences. This is essential for successful integration amongst the two parties to be achieved.

Narrator: We live in a multicultural world and the United Kingdom is no exception amongst the countries enriched with the many different ethnic groups and nationalities. Our documentary has touched on the specific group of Spanish and Latin American migrants living, working, and studying here. We have had first-hand accounts of their experiences varying from the positives to the challenges. Although we expressed earlier that there is no exact definition of integration, our participants have given mixed reviews on how they perceive aspects of their integration in their new host country. They confirmed language learning was the most difficult challenge to overcome when settling in their new lives. Their accounts illustrate the fact that there is much more to learning English than may appear to a native speaker. We have also seen that cultural awareness is extremely important when trying to integrate because there are many elements to our culture that conflict with the views of others. It appeared that university life seems to be a better environment to meet and interact with natives, which in turn enables the integration process. Our student participants stated that it was easy to get involved with certain cultural activities at the university, which then helped friendships to form. In smaller and closer communities, outside the academic sphere, it was a much harder task because these resources are not so widely and openly available.

I hope our documentary has delivered some interesting and thought-provoking insight into the experiences of foreign nationals living in the UK today. Thank you very much for listening to this documentary, as part of the OPENLIVES project at the University of Leeds.