**OpenLIVES Spanish Émigré interviews – Carmelo & Fatima Alonso (1)**

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| Interviewee: | Carmelo & Fatima Alonso |
| Interviewer: | Dr. Alicia Pozo-Gutierrez |
| Interview date: | 27 March 2008 |
| Location: | Zaragoza |
| Duration: | 02:01:28 |
| Countries of migration: | England |

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** OpenLIVES materials are interviews with individuals and describe the personal memories, perspectives, and knowledge of those individuals. English synopses for OpenLIVES were created by students working on the project. The idea behind the synopsis is to give a broad outline of the content NOT to give an exact translation of an interviewee’s words. In some cases, there were sections which were difficult to hear or summarise and which we have been unable to clarify. These areas are highlighted in red. If users of this material do further work in contextualising this testimony, please share your work with the world through the HumBox!

**Synopsis:**

[00.34 – 10.00] Early life and work during adolescence

Carmelo born in Burgos in 1951, but came to Zaragoza with family when he was a baby (so young he doesn’t remember). Mother was from Zaragoza. Lived and went to school in Zaragoza until he decided to leave the country. He had 2 brothers, one who lives in Zaragoza and the eldest, who went to England and married a Galician woman there. He’s now been there for several years.

What was Zaragoza like back then? It was different then to what it is like today. He had to choose between studying or working, at 14 years of age. So he decided to start working (in the hospitality industry). He decided this because his whole family had experience in this industry, and his family owned a bar.

So how did he get the idea of travelling to England? At 14, he started working in several different cafés in Zaragoza as a waiter. At around 16 he started talking to friends who worked in hotels & cafés on the Spanish coast. This gave him the idea to go too, so he applied to work in different hotels in Alicante, and found work. So he decided to work there during his summers. Immigrating to work in hospitality and tourism on the coast during the summer was very common for people like Carmelo in Zaragoza. Back then, this pattern was very common. If you were lucky, when you came back to Zaragoza after summer, you would have work over winter too. But the money you made over summer on the coast was more than enough to live on for the rest of the year.

Could choose where you wanted to work, as demand for employees was so high. Started this work from 1965 until about 1968. Work in all industries was relatively easy to come by at the time. Tourism was beginning to boom and he could’ve worked in Mallorca, Benidorm, the Canaries.

English businessmen, who owned apartments there, came to Alicante. He remembers one such man - Mr. Lee, who owned tourism businesses in Minehead, Somerset. Mr. Lee asked some of the younger waiters if they would like to work for him in Minehead. The workplaces were different to what they were used to; much quieter and the cooking was simple. The customers were typically older people. The place was very pretty, but too quiet and boring for their liking. He didn’t go to England to work, he went for the Rock n’ Roll (Beatles, Rolling Stones, The Who). Says there are 2 types of immigrants; those who emigrate out of financial need (who come from poor backgrounds) and the younger ones who aren’t looking to make money, but just have a good time. The former type made up the majority.

Arrived in 1968/69 with a friend from Zaragoza to work for Mr. Lee. Brother lived in Coventry at the time, but they didn’t see each other yet.

[10.01 – 20.00] First years in England & differences between Spain & England

He didn’t ask for brother’s help, but parents asked for brother to keep an eye on him. The idea at the time was that the first money you would make would be to save up to buy a flat later on. But this didn’t interest Carmelo, who just wanted to have a good time. Spent all he earned, without saving up. He had good jobs, that paid well but he threw away all the money he made (partly in casinos). It was the first time they had seen a casino in their lives. They were astounded by it and dreamt of becoming rich. Took them a while to realise that it wouldn’t make them rich.

What else surprised you about life in England? The lifestyle, the freedom to do what you liked. Life in Spain was repressed in comparison. He was surprised that he could buy magazines like *Playboy* in England, but the Spaniards were even more shocked when he showed them. Was normal in England. When a disco opened in Zaragoza it was a big event, but in London was very common, so Carmelo wasn’t surprised. The discos in London were extravagantly decorated and there was one with 7 different rooms! At a disco in Zaragoza if there were any girls at all they would be with their brothers or their fathers. Discos were open much later in England too. He was very impressed by the youth culture in England in the 60s.

Fatima had originally left Portugal to go to England with the intention of taking an English language course for a few weeks. Ended up staying 10 years. She had wanted to leave because her mother (and Portuguese society) were very strict and religious and she wanted to liberate herself a bit from this repression and travel and see the world a bit. Returned to Portugal at the time of the Carnation Revolution in 1974. When she was going to leave, they detained her because she wasn’t 21 yet, which was the legal age of adulthood in Portugal at the time. So she required the permission of her father to leave the country. Father wasn’t at home when they called, but uncle pretended to be her father and gave his permission. Was detained in Heathrow until received permission to leave. Her half-sister (half-Angolan) also lived in England. Her father had spent many years in Angola. Fatima started working in England, fell in love with it, and decided to stay.

Carmelo and his friend decided to leave Minehead after 2 months there, because it was too quiet from them, as it was a place for elderly people to relax. So they packed their bags and took the train to London, without any guaranteed work there.

[20.01 – 30.00] First months in London

They thought they might return to Spain because their visa was only due to last 6 months. Got to London in July and it was very hot. Found Hyde Park, Piccadilly etc. very beautiful. This dissuaded them from returning to Spain. Phoned a contact his friend had details of. It turned out, by coincidence, that he was a manager of a French restaurant, very near Selfridges. So they went to his house, and he told them that they needed workers. So he said he would look for accommodation for them immediately, as they were in a B&B. In 4 days they had managed to find work and accommodation!

Ended up living near Victoria station where a lot of Spanish immigrants lived. Their housing was very basic, like shared bedsits, with 1 or 2 rooms & small kitchenettes. At the time this would could about £3-5/week, whilst you could earn around £20/week from work, so was cheap. In ‘68/’69 in London life was great. There were festivals, gigs and discos all over the place.

So they had work, but their visas ended after 6 months. After this time they had to go back to the Home Office to get their new work permit verified to give them permission to stay longer. Was easy to do. His friend had to leave the country and come back again, because he was 1 year younger than Carmelo. At the time it was common for people to renew their visas by leaving the country (often to France) for 24 hours and then returning again, with the customs stamp.

In those days in London, it was normal for people to get several jobs with a recruitment agency, and it wasn’t looked down upon (whilst it would have been in Spain). Sometimes you would want to work and earn more, and you could. But if you wanted to have more time to live, and earn less money, equally it was possible for you. The recruitment agencies were very useful for finding people little jobs at the time. Recalls an anecdote where he overheard a student from Madrid (there were many in London) in a recruitment agency. Said he was a civil engineer and they offered him a vacancy as a gravedigger.

They both fell in love with lifestyle and independence in London. They liked the anonymity, how the neighbours didn’t pay any attention to how they dressed or lived. Totally different in Spain where everyone gossips about neighbours.

[30.01 – 40.00] Learning English & integration in UK

Now after living in England they like to maintain their independence, privacy and distance from people. Some people in Spain thought them strange or distant because of this, though without being antisocial. Say they have never argued with anyone in their town.

Once a year, immigrants were required to go to the Home Office. Carmelo met these people because they needed someone to go with them who could speak English. These tended to be older people, who had emigrated principally to make money. Carmelo didn’t speak English before arriving in England, but learnt as he went along. Some of these people couldn’t speak more than 3 or 4 words of English despite being 20 or 30 years in the country! Met Spanish exiles from the civil war who didn’t want or need to learn because they were always thinking about going back to Spain. Carmelo couldn’t understand it.

There were also people who worked as guides for Spanish workers who didn’t speak English. For the first 4 years living in England, you always needed to have a work permit to remain in the country. For this reason many Spaniards had jobs that were not in their trade. Many of them used to be builders, but began working in hospitality out of necessity. His brother-in-law is one example as he used to buy old houses, restore them and then sell them on. He made lots of money from it. The freedom for Spaniards to set up their own companies after 4 years residence in England allowed them to earn good money from their own businesses.

In the UK he found that it was easier for immigrants to set up their own businesses, and thus to better integrate in society. In France or Germany was not so easy, and children of immigrants have never fully integrated as a result. Their daughter has British and Spanish passports. In 1980 Thatcher introduced legislation to stop granting citizenship to children of immigrants. Daughter was born in ‘78, so she wasn’t affected.

She lives in Zaragoza and is doing postgrad studies in immigration law. The family is very international. Fatima’s sister-in-law is French and her father lived in Angola for many years. Fatima works with Doctors Without Borders and thinks it is a very valuable experience to meet people from other cultures as it opens your mind and you always learn something.

Carmelo says immigrants in Britain always live in good conditions. In Spain, however, one can often see immigrants living in deplorable conditions, in shanty towns. In England, as soon as you have a baby, you are given council housing immediately and you get state financial support.

[40.01 – 50.00] 1970s in London & memories of IRA

You were always given housing of reasonable quality. When Fatima was 20 had 1st baby and the state sent people to help her look after and clean her. She was happy with this as she had no idea how to look after a child at that age. What happens to immigrants in France, Germany etc. is unacceptable, where immigrants live in awful conditions, and provide no support for any children they have. So they have very good memories of the Welfare State. At the time, if you needed treatment in hospitals, you didn’t need to show papers, social security details or anything. Since then people have taken advantage of this generosity. They remember this very fondly.

Met each other in London in ‘74/’75. They stayed there and got married (without telling Fatimas’ parents). Carmelo carried on working in hospitality, but began to choose the jobs he wanted to work in. He got better and better jobs. He was 3rd or 4th best barman in Europe. Worked in the cocktail bars of the Churchill, Hilton, Skyline and Dorchester hotels. These places are where the best cocktail barmen work. In these jobs he met interesting people from all over world.

During the 70s there was trouble with the IRA. Bomb threats were occurring all over the place, in hotels, shops etc. (such as Post Office Tower). Fatima remembers one day a car-bomb went off in front of US embassy and was on top floor of building opposite. Had to evacuate building immediately, some people were in towels.

Carmelo remembers being in the cocktail bar in Skyline Hotel. Was with Italian colleague (worked with many Italians) at the bar. He saw police come up the lift with dogs. Police spoke to manager and gave him order to evacuate because of bomb scare. Carmelo & Italian heard this and ran out of the building as fast as they could. They waited outside at the fire assembly point as the clientele appeared 5-10 minutes later. Manager told them off for not informing the customers of the scare. Didn’t think it was their responsibility. Realised they had run down in 3 ½ minutes. Next time joked they would do it in 3. Were thinking about saving their own lives.

[50.01 – 60.00] Unrest in Spain/Portugal while they were in London

Did you follow what was happening in Spain/Portugal? Yes, thought about returning to Spain once Carmelo’s father had died and when their flat was for sale. They met in ‘74/’75 (the year Franco died) and got married in ’76. Was an interesting period for current affairs in both Portugal and Spain. Thanks to Franco’s death & Carnation Revolution in Portugal felt they could return home. Fatima remembers one time at school when Marcelo Caetano visited and they had to greet him. Has another memory of life under the repressive regime, recalling how spies would listen to conversations.

Fatima came back to Portugal one summer and went to a protest (which was illegal then) dressed as a hippy. A man approached, in civilian dress and asked friend why he had a banner, with the dictatorship in power. Friend was detained. As she had been outside the country, had forgotten how dangerous it was.

Carmelo says prior to Franco’s death there were shootings of Basques which induced protests in Spain. In London protests were common and there was rarely trouble with the police (“the bobbies”) who didn’t carry arms. The fact that the atmosphere was more laid-back in this respect surprised him. As they were young when lived in Portugal/Spain, they didn’t get involved in protests back then.

Only got interested when the Coup d’état happened in Spain and they were going to sell their flat, until an Irish friend called to warn them of the Coup and to tell them not to sell their flat!

They also lived through the period of the Brixton riots as their flat was nearby, in Clapham North. There was a history of tension between young black people and the police in the area. The riots were sparked off by a policeman who was alleged to have assaulted a black man. This led to escalating violence. He says this is normal in a ghetto neighbourhood with racial tension.

In personal experience they had lived in a very multicultural neighbourhood and they got on well with all the minorities they were in contact with. They do not have a bad word to say against any of them. They have always been treated well by them. They felt very good in London, within their community etc.

What did you miss from Spain? Fatima says the good weather. Found English weather (darkness and rain) depressing.

[60.01 – 70.00] Going out in London

Carmelo missed the Spanish ambience. Pubs in London are special in their own way, but they aren’t comparable with the Tapas bars of Spain, for example. Didn’t miss food because they made Spanish food in their own house. Lived next to Brixton Market, where they could find all sorts of foods. They met an Asturian couple there. The husband was a bit shady and one time he took Carmelo into the back of a corner shop, where there turned out to be a hidden bar. It was open at time in the afternoon when all pubs were still closed. Inside there were even gambling tables, like a clandestine casino. They were the only white people there.

Fatima met a leader of the National Front who had racist and far-right leanings, but got on well with him.

Carmelo used to love Soho. He would leave clubs at 3AM and you could find several places to eat until 5AM. But you had to know where to go, because many of these places were hidden.

Carmelo was in London just over 12 years and Fatima 10 years. They spent their time there with a view to having a good time. They note that the majority of immigrants stay where they are, in their houses or at work. These people can be 10-15 years in one place and not have visited the stuff that is 20 metres away. But then there are other people, like Carmelo and Fatima, who want to see and try absolutely everything. After leaving work at 11pm, they would go straight to the discos in Piccadilly. They didn’t care that they had to work the next day. When the time came to return home, it was often difficult to find the transport to get there. So people used to go in the 24hour cinema and sleep there for 3 or 4 hours. The following morning they took showers and went straight to work again. They could do this in their 20s because they had the energy. Fatima never thought about saving up money for the future, was always interested in living for the day, spending what she earned.

She used to live with a wealthy Indian family who gave her money to go out with. But there was a problem because one of their sisters died in India so they had to leave. Fatima was left alone and was scared of the statues of the Hindu gods in the house. To respect a period of mourning, cooking was forbidden in the house so Fatima found it awkward to live there. Then she left the house to find somewhere else to live.

Fatima and Carmelo knew each other before this. Fatima went to London in ’72. They have 3 children, 1 daughter and 2 sons (born in Spain).

How did you experience Franco’s death in ’75? When Carmelo was in England at 20, he was called back to Spain to do military service. If you chose to return to Spain and you were still in the first 4 years of your residence in England, you may have had trouble to return to live there in the future. So all his family and friends dissuaded him from returning to Spain.

[70.01 – 80.00] Leaving England

So he decided not to, along with many other Spaniards living abroad at the time. This meant that he wouldn’t be able to move back to live in Spain until he was 32, and if he did he would have to join the military service. As it was he had the right to spend 1 month/year in Spain. So this was what he did, until ’76 when they returned for good.

As Fatima wasn’t interested in politics, she didn’t know what was happening in Spain. Carmelo wasn’t too interested either but sometimes found out news from his family. Even if they knew what was happening, it didn’t affect their lives, so they didn’t take much interest. Other people were desperately awaiting Franco’s death, because they couldn’t return to Spain when he was alive for political reasons, which wasn’t the case for Fatima and Carmelo.

Their return to Spain didn’t depend on Franco’s death. They came back because they thought that if they didn’t at that point, then they never would. Thought it was better to bring a 3 year old daughter back to Spain than if she was already 10 or 12. Was a case of now or never. Carmelo’s brother had decided to return from England when children were 16. So the children now live in England and the parents in Spain.

So you didn’t want to stay in London? No, because London was a good place to live as young people, but when you have children it’s not great because there are problems such as crime. Didn’t you think about moving to a suburb or the countryside? No, it was London or nothing. They found the idea of the countryside boring, although pretty. Wouldn’t mind doing it now because they are older.

Also came back for family reasons because Carmelo’s mother was alone and they wanted to be with Fatima’s parents. They also looked into the possibility of getting a job back in Spain or setting up a business of their own. He had seen examples of friends who had bought flats in London, and when they left and sold their flats they got a great deal of money from them compared to the price they bought them for. So he realised that they could also earn a lot of money by selling their flat in London, which would allow them to buy one in Spain as well.

So the motives for returning to Spain were varied. When they came back to Spain they were still young. Cristine (daughter) was 3 years old Fatima was 24 and he was 29. One son (Daniel) was born in ’87.

Fatima left England first, leaving Carmelo behind for 3 or 4 months at a friend’s (Benito) house to tie up loose ends etc.. Carmelo’s brother owned a flat in Spain and wasn’t using it, so he offered it to them. After this Fatima went to Portugal with Cristina and their cat. After Carmelo’s time in England he filled up his Datsun car with all their belongings and drove back to Portugal, through France and north of Spain (via San Sebastian, Burgos, Valladolid, Salamanca y Lisboa).

[80.01 – 90.00] Finding work in Spain & readjusting to Spanish life

After leaving UK stayed with mother for a bit near Zaragoza before joining Fatima in Portugal. Then they returned to Zaragoza together. When they got back (1982) the situation in Spain wasn’t how Carmelo had imagined it would be when he was in London. He’d imagined that he would be able to set up his own business (i.e. hotel, restaurant) or get work. This was not the case as there was a great deal of unemployment and the economy was very weak. So he got a bit worried and his brother thought he was going to return to England.

But he found a job in a new hotel thanks to his work experience. The hotel business wasn’t the same as in London as people wouldn’t treat workers with respect, but rather like a servant.

So they were doing OK in Zaragoza, but they didn’t feel as though they would stay there until retirement because they didn’t feel at home. Cristina didn’t like it because she said everyone screeched at her at school. She spoke English with her parents as her Spanish wasn’t very good then. She was used to saying please and thank you in English. They think people in Spain didn’t used to say it due to a lack of respect or politeness. Modern Spaniards may now be more polite however.

Carmelo felt like he would return to England. They started to feel like foreigners in their own country. Didn’t feel at home. Would’ve been easier to find work in England as well. Was hard to set up a business in Spain. People tried to trick him into ripping him off by promising help with setting up a business. Carmelo was careful and didn’t trust them.

The only things people talked about were unemployment and the arrival of the General Motors factory. Carmelo didn’t really know about General Motors but he decided to take an entrance exam, just out of curiosity, with a friend who was interested in working for them.

So despite the fact he had no experience in the motor industry, he got a reply 2 weeks later inviting him to a 2nd round of interviews, with dozens of others. After this he was contacted again for further interviews 2 weeks later. His friend said that he still hadn’t been contacted but that he was certain he would get a job because he knew someone who would help him get the job within the company. So Carmelo took the next round of tests and then was contacted by General Motors, inviting him for 1 final round of testing to see what position he could perform within the company.

He was informed that successful applicants would be called in for medical examinations. Only at this point did his friend say that he was starting to worry that he might not have got the job.

[90.01 – 100.00] Working in General Motors

Then Carmelo was contacted to come in for medical examinations, which meant he had got the job. After this he saw his friend who was sure of getting a job, who told him that he wouldn’t get a job after all. Carmelo felt guilty about this. He doesn’t know why they picked him as he doesn’t have experience in the motor industry. Given that he had managed to secure such a good job, this convinced him to stay. This gave him his weekends free and guaranteed holidays, which he never used to get when he worked in hospitality.

He’s been working with General Motors for 26 years now and he’s very happy. Back then if you managed to get a job in General Motors you were considered exceptionally lucky, as if you had won the lottery, such was unemployment at the time. His friend (who didn’t get the job) kept asking him about the job, whether he liked it etc. This made him feel awkward, as though he owed him something. He couldn’t bear it!

Did you miss London? Yes, their goal was always to return there at the first possible opportunity with their children. Still haven’t gone because they feel a bit separated from London now but they still intend to go one day.

Have you kept in contact with friends you made there? Yes, many have left London now. One friend set up a business in London & returned to Spain and married a Galician. His kids now run the business in England. He had also come from Zaragoza but his parents were Andalucian.

Did you meet people in General Motors who had emigrated? Yes, many. He says he always got along much better with people who had been abroad than with those who had never travelled anywhere. He could relate to them better. Almost as though he understood them better. When he spoke to people who hadn’t been abroad about his experiences, it seemed like they didn’t understand him. There were immigrants from Germany there who got very good positions in General Motors because they worked in the motor industry over there too (for companies like Opel).

Fatima says if she could do it again she would. Has no regrets. Carmelo says the 70s were the best years of his life without doubt. The rest has been OK, but not as special as those times. So much was happening back then, especially in terms of music. Since ’85 music has been average.

He saw Dire Straits before they were famous. He has a guitar but he wasn’t talking about playing music himself. The Dire Straits played small gigs in garages. People used to live like hippies back then.

Had a Spanish friend called Benito at the time who worked at Paul McCartney’s studios cleaning the offices.

[100.01 – 110.00] Reintegration in Spain

So Benito invited Carmelo along one day to the studios. Most people were out at a recording in Oxford Street, apart from 1 or 2. Carmelo was waiting for Benito to finish work when a guy came out in a black leather jacket. As the guy gets into the lift Carmelo can’t believe his eyes-it’s Paul McCartney! His friend Benito has a quick chat with him as though he’s no one special. Carmelo is surprised and asks Benito if he knows who he is. He knows who he is but he’s not very excited or interested as he saw him every day at work.

Carmelo also came across many show business stars in his job as a barman. Around Chelsea it was normal to see celebrities. Fatima met Sean Connery and felt very short standing next to him. In the Churchill Hotel he used to meet artists almost every day. He has always been lucky that he has been able to work in nice places.

So when you came back to Spain, how did you readjust to life there? What memories do you have of how Spanish society had changed? Well Zaragoza, before General Motors arrived, wasn’t a very attractive or charming place. But since their arrival the town underwent industrialisation and all sorts of industries began setting up there, turning the town into the Zaragoza that we know today. Before General Motors it was a small town, but their arrival triggered an industrial boom. So you arrived just in time to witness all this development? Yes, when they arrived their house was isolated with the exception of a school nearby. Now it’s all built up.

So now you’re happy to be here? Yes, they’ve adapted to life in Spain now. They aren’t as strange as they made themselves sound really. They have made some friends, who understand that they’re a bit different from other Spaniards. They like going out with their friends to eat, for example. Don’t like being in the house all day.

They say they have the record for never having argued with any of their friends or neighbours. They think this is because they keep themselves to themselves and they don’t care about what their neighbours get up to in their private lives. They get on well with others, but also keep their private lives private. Friends have told them, in a friendly way, that people in the neighbourhood think they are a little unusual, but not in a bad way.

They have friends who have been trying, for 2 years, to invite them to a holiday apartment in the mountains for a weekend away. But Carmelo keeps saying to them that they are busy with their own kids or they are doing their own thing on weekends. They like to maintain their independence from each other as well. If one of them wants to do something that the other doesn’t, it doesn’t matter-they will go alone.

They are different from their neighbours. Spaniards think that they are an extravagant or strange couple because partners in Spain tend to do things as a couple, whereas they don’t. For example Carmelo says that a typical Sunday for Fatima would be to go to the Flea Market. She doesn’t go to buy things, just to look, because you can find strange and interesting things there. Carmelo likes it, but Fatima loves it!

Carmelo shows the interviewer a fold-out bar that he made himself. He didn’t know where to keep all his odds & ends that he had from his career as a barman, so he built this to keep them in.

[110.01 – 120.00] Home in Spain & missing England

Based its design on a similar one he saw in an English mansion. You open it and fold it out so it becomes a bar. Demonstrates how it works to interviewer. She asks them for a photo because she’s never seen anything like it.

When his son was in Scotland last year he brought him back something. He always brings souvenirs back with him whenever he travels. They have lots of strange pieces of furniture at home that don’t match. It’s a hotchpotch. Fatima and her daughter like African/ethnic art styles. Doctors Without Borders brought some crafts back with them from Angola for Fatima. She doesn’t have family in Angola any more. Interviewer says the house seems very multicultural. Some people don’t like it because they find it scary or strange.

Fatima doesn’t care about decoration and says that it’s more important to feel comfortable in their own home. The decoration isn’t very typical.

Their kids are still living at home. The oldest of the boys, Daniel, is studying chemical engineering at university. Cristina is working with immigrants and immigration law. The youngest is still at secondary school. Do they speak English? Yes, the oldest speaks the best, as well as some Portuguese because Fatima wanted her to speak it. As a family they speak Spanish. Fatima has now lost all trace of her Portuguese accent. Lots of people think she is Galician or Catalan, but not Portuguese.

They have a cat that’s just turned 11. They also had a pet when they were in England. So they brought it back to Spain in a special box on the plane, which cost a lot to do because of all the vaccinations, jabs etc. They didn’t want to leave it there. People thought it was strange to bring a cat over on the plane, but they didn’t.

Have you brought things back with you? Not material, but spiritual, maybe? Oh yes, because it was a very important period of their lives. Fatima introduces their 2nd cat.

Do you ever cook dishes you learnt in England at home? Yes, many. They have made Shepherd’s Pie, Apple Pie themselves. They also like Strawberries & Cream with Champagne like in Wimbledon.

Do you follow the news about happenings in England? Yes, they are very up-to-date as they used to have Sky News. Now they have the internet & they buy British newspapers like the Sun, the Star and the Express at a shop in Plaza San Francisco in Zaragoza. These papers are printed in Spain, mainly to sell to the British people living on Spanish coast. But in Zaragoza the ones they buy are always 1 day out-of-date. Always likes following the news because you can understand what’s going on. This is not just because you can understand the language, but also because you have been in the country, so you have an understanding of how things work there and what British people are like.

Carmelo loves the British sense of humour, how they laugh about everything. This is what he liked most about English culture. Spaniards do have a sense of humour, but not as much, and the British humour is totally unrivalled. They can even laugh about politics. But to be able to get the humour, you have to know and understand the English people. Old English comedy programmes on Sky have been translated into Spanish. Sometimes the translations are funny, but not nearly as much as the original versions, where you hear people laughing every other second. Fatima says that the humour is lost in translation, which also happens with films. Fatima recalls that when she was younger in Portugal films were shown in English with Portuguese subtitles, which helped them to learn the English accent. Now films are dubbed, so you don’t learn the original accent like you used to.

[120.01 – 121.28] The English accent

Fatima thinks this may be why older Portuguese generations tend to have better English accents than the younger ones, and the Spaniards. The Interviewer feels she has retained Spanish accent despite living in England for many years, whilst her Portuguese colleagues barely have any accent at all. Spanish people always say “espanish” instead of “Spanish”.