

Interview: Isabella

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Transcriber: Myla Corvidae

Attendance:

Lucia Ruggerone – LR

Charlie Hackett – CH

Isabella

Emotions have been added into the transcript as i.e. [*sadness*] and interviewers have been placed in bold and italicised. Any sections that need to be checked for accuracy such as phrases in other languages or names of places I couldn't confirm the spelling of have been highlighted in red.

Recording starts mid conversation

CH: Your English is good!

I: I came here three years ago with no English at all and I learnt everything I know at work, speaking with people, no lessons, no anything. Well... I'm taking lessons but it's more like conversations. Once a week with all other Spanish people and one teacher.

CH: That's super impressive.

LR: Don't worry, I think your English is fine but if you want to revert to Spanish sometimes, I don't know Spanish but I understand it anyway because it's so similar to Italian.

I: It is so similar. Yeah I'm happy that you're here because if I need it I can say things in Spanish and you will understand.

LR: Slowly, slowly because if you talk quickly I don't understand but if you talk slowly I usually understand.

I: Perfect. I'm 35, I have two sons but one lives in Spain with his dad because he has a disability and I find this city very... not good for people with disabilities.

LR: Where do you live?

I: I live in Edinburgh, he's fourteen and he's very happy in Spain so I allow him to stay in Spain because I think he is better there than here and I live here with Mario, he's eight. He's doing good but he's still having trouble with the language. We moved here, I moved here before to settle then bring him after six months. He came in September 2019, he went to school one month and then went to Spain for Christmas and when he came back the lockdown started and he was in P3 so they didn't have any online lessons or anything so we've been home for nine months, just him and me. Not speaking with anybody.

LR: And speaking Spanish to each other?

I: Yeah, the School say you must speak in Spanish at home so he don't forget his language because he's speaking English everywhere but home but for nine month he only speak in Spanish. He started learning a year ago.

LR: Oh well, it'll get better. You know that kids learn very quickly, I think he will soon know English better than you. He will beat you.

I: I know he will translate for me. I know that.

LR: I know because when we moved here my son was about 12 but he knew a little bit of English but he never really activated it because we were living in Italy but you know when in a month time he picked it up and now he's bilingual. Kids are really like sponges, they absorb everything.

I: Also I had to change my mind. I mean you see my profile and my email but doesn't sound good in English so my name is Isabella here.

LR: Really?

I: Yeah.

LR: Why does it not sound good

I: *[laughing]* He knows!

CH: No I don't!

LR: What's wrong with it?

I: No because it sounds like a really bad word.

LR: Really?

I: Yeah. I found out at work, it's like bell end.

LR: Ok I didn't even know that, see my English isn't very good either.

CH: Yeah I wouldn't even think about that whatsoever.

I: No?

CH: No never, it would never come to my mind ever.

I: Oh, well it comes to my college and work, they use to call me that because they didn't know how to pronounce it. So when they told me what that means I just change it. I'm Isabella now.

LR: Ok, where do you work?

I: I clean. I don't think I prepared to have another work with people. I don't want to speak to people. I can speak with my colleagues, they're all Scottish but I don't think I can work in front of people yet with this English.

LR: It might change soon.

CH: I think your English is excellent.

I: I can speak better than I can understand because the accent here in Edinburgh is not easy.

LR: I know the Scottish accent is not easy I know.

I: I need a little more of time to be confident you know.

LR: Yeah I still sometimes, there's so many different accents and sometimes some of my students have very broad accents and sometimes they ask me questions and I have to ask them to repeat, especially, correct me if I'm wrong Charlie, especially people from the very north east coast like Fraserburgh and those places. They have a really odd and difficult accent.

CH: Yeah they do. Fraserburgh definitely.

I: Fraserburgh, I'm not ready yet.

CH: Yeah but Edinburgh it's lots of Spanish and Italian people.

I: Yeah I don't have any Spanish friends because I really want to learn English.

LR: Well I think we should start from your picture because that's what we do with all our participants and share my screen. I have to rotate it in a minute, just I'll start sharing my screen and then rotate it hold on.

I: My art skill are bad I'm sorry.

CH: No it's not it's great!

LR: It's fine!

I: I did what I could.

LR: Ok hold on, I'll just modify it so we can see it. Ok I think that's enough, I can't get it any bigger here but yep. Ok?

CH: That's great.

LR: Ok yeah Isabella, oh sorry or Isabella.

I: You can say Isabella if you like.

LR: Isabella, can you talk us through your picture and explain to us what you wanted to express there and why?

I: That was literally our life for nine month. Sitting in the couch, playing video games and I was twenty four seven with my friends on Skype. They are in Spain and that was like our life for nine months literally. I ordered food on the internet, we never go out for nine month.

LR: Really? You didn't go to the shops?

I: No.

LR: OK were you very afraid?

I: No, but we ... I mean I didn't have a car or anything so I ordered my shop a delivery for home. So I didn't have anywhere to go, with him we don't know anybody here.

LR: OK, and how did you feel in those months apart from you know, doing what you said you were doing but how were you feeling in yourself?

I: I liked, we are inside people, indoors, both. He loves his video games but after some time it was ooft, we get tired. I stopped cooking, started ordering because I didn't want to cook.

LR: Ok why not because you had more time presumably because you were home but you said you didn't want to?

I: Yeah but I cooked a lot for the first month but after some time I get tired of that. I didn't want to cook or we didn't want to do anything. We were bored and tired of being home with no friends or family.

LR: Yes but you were in touch with your friends in Spain.

I: Yeah all the time, we used the Skype or Discord to do many video games. We used to do escape rooms every day and our phonecalls were maybe sometimes twelve hours. I was cleaning my house, my friend was cleaning hers but on Skype all the time.

LR: Ok.

I: Son made some friends on fortnite.

CH: What's your son's name again is it Mario?

I: ...

CH: Ok, Mario and Isabella ok.

I: You want to know him, he's here.

CH: No it's fine it's fine. So how were your friends dealing with Covid at the time.

I: In Spain it was worst I think because here we have restrictions but times when I went to the shop there were kids playing in the park and you know but in Spain it was much. They had fines for going out with no reason. They were the same like us but we were doing that because we don't have anyone here, no places to go, no vehicle to go.

LR: Would you have liked to be in Spain during those months? Would you have prepared to be in Spain rather than Edinburgh?

I: Oh yeah, with my mum and my sister yeah. It would have been easier I think with more people because I spent my lockdown with an eight years old. That was my conversation.

LR: Yeah that must have been really hard.

I: Yeah it was.

CH: It must be very isolating for you.

I: Yes.

CH: So can we ask you why you decide to come to Scotland?

I: Well I wanted to leave Spain because the situation there is bad. I don't think people here know how bad is it in Spain. Yeah, it's bad.

LR: What way is it so bad?

I: I can tell you my experience. I used to work in a call centre in Spain for six hundred Euros a month and I had to pay eighty euros for food for him at school because it's not free like it is here, two hundred euros every year for books and school stuff and we have to eat at home, pay the rent, the electricity, the gas. That was impossible.

LR: So the work situation you mean.

I: You have no right, my mum was working in a restaurant for six years I think and she wanted holidays. They fired her, she go holidays and they take her back when she was back because she didn't have even the right for holidays at work for nine hundred euros. The work situation is terrible in Spain so I wanted to leave and I came here because I'm a little geek. I came here because I love History also I'm a big fan of Harry Potter for my mums birthday we book a flight here for four days and I said I wanted to live there. I wanted to leave space so I came here for holidays and I fell in love with the city, with the Scottish people, also I wanted to learn English I think for my son is going to be great to have both language.

LR: Yes, yes of course. So did you go back to Spain from the holiday and came back or did you just?

I: No went back home for four months, after four months I was living in here.

LR: Ok, that's great that you could find a place to stay and everything. It's very you know, it's very brave.

I: I think so, I leave work, I didn't know anything about here I didn't speak the language. I didn't know anyone here, I just came and I found...

LR: When was this? 2018?

I: 19' in April.

LR: OK, so you decided to come despite Brexit?

I: That's why I didn't hurry that much, because I wanted to come before Brexit. Just a few month but yeah I came just in time to have my right to work.

LR: Ok so just before.

CH: Did you have to research that before you came?

I: No, I mean I asked people but I asked should I go or should I find another place to go? I wanted to leave Spain but people they didn't really know what was going to happen with Brexit. We still don't know many things.

LR: Yes and how do you feel about that? How do you feel about coming to a country that decided to leave Europe and you are European?

I: I don't think they decided. England decide. So I feel very welcome here, people here is... I mean the people I know here in Edinburgh, they didn't want to leave so I don't feel they don't want me here.

LR: Sure, so you're not suffering from the Brexit situation, it didn't really affect you?

I: Hmm... No. I mean I suffer sometimes, like not finding milk in the supermarket or petrol for my car. I suffer the consequences in that way but I don't feel I'm not welcome here.

CH: Did you have to apply for the settled status thing?

I: Yeah, the temporary one, the first one.

CH: OK.

LR: The pre-settled I think it's called.

I: Yeah that one.

LR: Yeah because you were not here long enough to apply for the settled one.

I: It's five years. I applied for me and they answered me in two days and then I applied for my son and then it took them six month to answer me and they needed more proof. I was nervous there because I applied for him in September of 2020 and they answered me in March 2021 so the Brexit was already here but yeah they accept him.

LR: Can I ask what do you particularly like about living in Scotland?

I: I like everything in Scotland. I'm in love with this country and with the people here but I've worked sixteen years in the hospitality in Spain for no money and with not life and here I have a life and I can go holidays. I dunno, I save money working as a cleaner. They (**valora?**), I don't know that word in English.

LR: They what?

I: (**Valora?**)

LR: Ok they value you and your work.

I: As a cleaner I mean, if I work ten hours they pay me ten hours, not four like in Spain.

LR: Is that legal in Spain? You're talking about things that to me, they should be illegal, like people not being entitled to holidays or people being paid for less hours than what they work.

I: Yeah, I'm working too many restaurants in Spain because my work was one day here one day here, whenever they need me and I've never had a contract, or worked contract. That's not been my history. They give me fifty Euros and that's it. It's not legal but they do it anyway.

LR: I know what you're talking about because in Italian we call it like black work which is, you know is not formalised in any shape or form, it's not formalised and therefore they just give you cash and it's not recorded anywhere yeah.

I: No, or if they contract you for half time but you are working full time they pay you half time.

LR: Yes I understand.

I: There's no work so you have to do it or no food in your table.

LR: Yeah I understand, so from that point of view you like the work situation in Britain but what else do you also like about Scotland?

I: I like everything. I love the history, I love the city, it's beautiful, it's like a dream. I went to the highlands, I'm from the North of Spain, it's pretty similar. It's very beautiful.

CH: Oh whereabouts?

I: I'm from Gardenia. Do you know Santander like the bank? I'm from Santander. It's pretty similar.

LR: Is that the Basque country?

I: Yeah, near.

LR: OK, I went to Pamplona a couple of times, is that near it?

I: Yeah, Basque country is in between (**Name of region in Spain?**) and (**Name of region in Spain?**). In the middle.

LR: Oh right ok.

I: Yeah it's not far.

CH: Isabella, that must have been hard for you to leave your other son behind?

I: Yeah that was the worst part but he didn't want to come, he is very happy in his school. I trust his dad. Not his dad but hmm, my mother-in-law, I trust her, she raise him always because I was always working and it was very hard for him the first years of the school with his disabilities and stuff but now he's going to special school and he's very happy, he's got friends. He didn't want to come so I let him stay, also we are from Santander, we have tiered flights from Santander to Edinburgh twice a week and I usually pay between five pounds and fifteen, never paid more than fifteen so for me it's me cheaper going to my city than going to Glasgow on the train. It's not easy during the lockdown and the pandemic but usually.

LR: Yeah I was going to ask were you worried during the lockdown you worried about yourself and your son here but were you worried about your family in Spain as well?

I: No, not really. I was not scared of the pandemic, not too much, just normal. We didn't know what was going to happen. I'm more scared now because a friend of mine died of Covid in Spain.

LR: Oh no!

I: Yeah, in January, last month. I'm more scared now because I thought with the vaccine but he wasn't vaccinated. I thought their situation was better now but now I actually known someone that died from Covid. He was 40 so I'm more scared now.

LR: Did you get vaccinated?

I: Yeah I had my third dose on Sunday.

LR: Ok.

I: My son went to Spain in December for Christmas and he had Covid in Spain.

LR: The little one?

I: Yeah.

LR: Oh dear, but kids don't get very ill. Kids are ok with Covid usually.

I: We know he had it because his uncle was with Covid but he get this but not symptoms or anything. It was just fine.

CH: I'm interested to know when you were coming back to Spain, were you worried about coming back to the UK in terms of your passport and your status?

I: No I travel with my passport, I mean I cannot have problems. My passport is my right to live and work here is with my passport. I can keep travel with my ID Spanish but I don't, just because I feel safe travelling with my passport.

CH: But it would have been so much easier for you would it not if UK had still been in Europe and you could have come to work here without a problem or anything.

I: Yeah I think. For my mum to come here to help me, now she's not working she can't come here and stay even as she's not working. She has to leave after a few months, six I think. Yeah it will be easier.

CH: So that's a shame that your mum can't stay longer then, ok.

I: Yeah she's not working right now so I could work more hours to make more money if she just was here with me now she's not working but she cannot come. She can come for that few month. She came last month but she can't stay.

LR: She can stay for a few months couldn't she?

I: She can stay for six months but she cannot stay here.

LR: No she cannot move here.

I: Or she can live here for six month but she cannot work.

LR: No, that's right yes of course. I think it might change because, I'm not sure now but I think people who have settled status are entitled to bring their family members. I'm not sure.

I: Dependent parents. My mum is not dependent of me, she's still young and she can work. I should have done before because for six month we could have do it but I didn't know. So I know now but it's too late.

LR: Yeah ok. So you're really thinking about getting settled in Scotland.

I: Yes, I'm not going back to Spain.

LR: Ok and can I ask why did you not go out during the lockdown because we could go out to a certain extent.

I: Yeah, but going where? I mean, we no vehicle. We booked a car in August that year, 2020 because my boss was selling his and we started going out a little more for an hour to the beach. After that we lived in the west of the city, there's nothing there.

LR: You still living here?

I: No we moved to Leith.

LR: Ok, nice.

CH: You must live quite close to where I live. I live in Edinburgh as well.

I: Ah you live in Edinburgh. During the lockdown I was in Westerhills. There's nothing there.

CH: Yeah. So what was your mood when you were there, how did you feel?

I: During the lockdown?

CH: Yeah.

I: People think it's a terrible place to live, I don't seen any difference about. I mean the people who live there and the people who live in Leith, they are the same. Here we are more close to the centre, we have everything we need, the big part. It's just from the ???house but I liked the Westerhills. My son had friends. He has no one here.

LR: Does he go to school now or pre-school?

I: He goes to school he's in P4. Oh that's another thing that was very tough because in Spain the schools start at six years old. Here they start at five so he started P2, never P1.

LR: Ok because of his age yes.

I: Yeah.

LR: He will make friends I'm sure if he goes to School now he will make friends.

I: Yeah but in Westerhills we lived in a building, there were seven eight buildings, no cars and we had a park in the middle, a very small one but all the kids from the blocks were in the park every day, playing together he was doing great but then we had to move.

LR: You had to move or you wanted to?

I: Yeah we were in a council flat and we moved to our one. We leave the council and we moved to another one but we are through a housing association so we couldn't choose. We applied for what they had.

LR: OK but you wanted to move though? You wanted to move? You applied to move.

I: No if I wanted to it doesn't matter I had to move because it was a council flat. I wanted to move to a bigger house but in Westerhills, I wanted to stay. I don't know people say Westerhills is a terrible place to live but I come from Spain, for me Westerhills was better than any normal town from where I come from. There are some people with a drugs problem you know but they are just fine, they don't bother you. There's that people in Leith as well. I liked the school in Westerhill it was a great school.

LR: Ok and did you make friends because you said during the lockdown you were feeling a bit lonely or am I putting words in your mouth? Were you feeling a bit lonely during lockdown?

I: No, I liked being lonely. That's my thing. I make friends, I don't make many Spanish friends because the Spanish people, I don't know if same happened with other nationalities but Spanish people used to, for what I know, they come here and they only speak with other Spanish people and not why I came here. I came here to learn English and if I want, if I only speak with Spanish people. So I made some Spanish friends, Colombian and other countries but not many and I have Scottish friends, they are teaching me Scottish. That's why in my English lessons with the other Spanish people they laugh at me because I speak with a Scottish accent sometimes because I'm learning with them. I never learnt English.

LR: Yes I understand, you pick up the accent from where you live of course.

I: Not the accent but the way that they, I don't know, the heath or you know some words I learnt in Scottish.

CH: That was a massive move to make. To come from Spain to live in Edinburgh. That was like a massive change for you.

I: Yes it was, but it was needed.

CH: So your drawing, are these two laptops one is yours and one is your sons? Is one of you playing that?

I: I have my laptop with me with Skype and he's playing Fortnite on his PS5.

CH: Oh Battleroyal ok.

I: Yeah he's playing that game.

LR: And the person on the left, the one with the red, is that red hair?

I: Yeah I only had red, it's more purple.

LR: Yeah ok.

I: That was me.

LR: And that's your son on the other side.

I: Yeah. My drawing skills are...

LR: No that's fine it's alright, it's very understandable. So how did you feel about your son being all the time on the screen, as a mom? Were you ok with it or were you a bit?

I: I have a problem. I know he's eight, his generation is screen generation. I'm not against the screens but he's all the time on the screen. I'm trying to but he's doing football now at school and swimming and I want him to start music to keep him away from the screens more longer.

LR: Yes I understand but during the lockdown that must have been really tough.

I: He told me, mama, I need to start reading more because I'm always on the screen. He knows.

LR: Oh that's good. Very mature, very wise little boy.

CH: Your drawing's interesting because all that's in the picture is the two screens.

I: Yeah.

CH: And you're just focused on that, that's all there is. So do you think that would sum up what it was like for other people at that time?

I: Sorry?

CH: Do you think that's how it was for other people?

I: For people I know it was the same. For all of us.

CH: It was the same?

I: With my mum, my sister.

CH: Ok, just being on the screen?

I: Or reading but it's easier if you are with somebody else, I mean an adult. Maybe you can have a chat or something but I only can have a chat through the screen.

LR: What were you talking about with your Spanish friends and relatives when you were on these long Skype calls? What were you talking about mostly?

I: We watched movies together, we used every day we used to do escape room.

LR: What's that? I don't know about this.

I: It's a game with puzzles. Usually you go to the escape room but during the lockdown all the escape we find online. Every day, one every day. It took you an hour, sometimes two if it's long. We played fortnight.

LR: What happens in the escape rooms, do you play games and stuff?

I: It's puzzles. Yeah. There's a story, I don't know? A murder and you need to find who did it, we have clues.

LR: It's like Cluedo, a bit like Cluedo.

I: Yeah, the very first one we made was about an African king, oh I don't know (Spanish word). They left for his son when he died I don't know.

LR: Inheritance.

I: Yeah it was a pile of toilet paper because you know people were crazy with it. It was very fun. Sometimes you have to send an email, they answer you, it's very fun and I played that with my friends because they are smart so if I cannot do the clue, the puzzle they do for me so we are a team. Also I never played video games in my life, they teach me now to play Fortnite so we played that for two hours maybe. I know, watch movies.

LR: Did you watch television, movies ok.

I: Yeah we don't have channels. We didn't have in Spain so here we don't have channels, why? In English? We didn't use it then in Spain but yeah Netflix. I think I watched everything on Netflix during the lockdown.

LR: There's a lot of Spanish speaking programmes on Netflix. There's a lot of Spanish and south American shows on Netflix.

I: No what I did was I watched everything in English so I learn quicker. I tried to use English subtitles as well unless I'm too tired, I use the Spanish subtitles so I don't have to think.

CH: Where do you see your home?

I: Sorry?

CH: Where do you think home is for you?

I: It's still Spain because my dad, my mum, my brothers are there, my sister. I don't know it's both because I feel home here but I still think I'm going home for holidays you know, to my friends.

LR: Have you been back to Spain at all during the lockdowns?

I: No. I went to Spain in November last year, first time and my son went spent the summer in Spain then we went in November and he went back in December for Christmas.

LR: Are you going this summer, this coming summer?

I: I don't think so. He is going. When Summer I have to send him to Spain because I still need to work and I don't know people here to stay with him for three month or two month. I can ask my friend to stay with him one day, not two month so I send him to Spain. I don't want to go, maybe three days or a weekend to see my mum, to say hello.

LR: Yes I understand because if you need to work you have to have somebody to look after your son because they're still young. Do you work all day?

I: Is easier here than in Spain. In Spain you cannot have sons if you don't have grandparents to watch them and here my boss, there's no school tomorrow, ok just leave, don't come. Easy.

LR: Oh that's good!

I: Yeah they are great.

LR: Good, good. That's great.

CH: So Isabella, do you see home as where your family is?

I: I don't know. My family is also here, so I feel home here but also Spain.

CH: Ok.

LR: OK that's good. Ok well, I think that could do Charlie couldn't it?

CH: Yeah. Do you miss the weather in Spain?

I: Ah I'm from the north. The only thing I don't like here is the wind. The wind but in my city the rain more than here where I come from.

LR: Yeah I know.

I: It's cold, I used to wake up in the morning at minus four in Spain and here I don't know minus six? It's no difference for me.

LR: I know that part of Spain doesn't have great weather. I think it's warmer in the Summer though. It's a lot warmer in the Summer.

I: Yeah, I don't see much difference during the winter but it's very different in Summer but I like the cold. My first option was Norway or Denmark, yeah I was looking for the cold but I'm happy here. Summer in Spain in my city, we can have twenty eight degrees, I don't know or thirty sometimes and that's too much for me. I rather the summer in Scotland, I don't miss the Spanish weather.

LR: Oh wow, do you miss the Spanish food?

I: Yes. I don't like Scottish food or British food. I don't think that's food, sorry.

LR: Charlie's Irish so don't worry about it. I don't think Irish food will be much better. I don't know exactly but I know Italian food is better.

I: Yeah, I love Italian food. It's the best food in the world and this week it's Spanish week in Lidl. Every time we have a Spanish week I go there and buy like crazy. We go crazy yeah.

LR: I quite like some of your, oh hello.

I: This is son.

LR: Have you got a spiderman suit, that's cool.

I: It's fine you can talk. Ok.

End of recording

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