

in their shoes

JE NE COMPRENDS PAS? NO ENTIENDO? THE COMPLEXITIES OF COMMUNICATING

SCENARIO TWELVE – BY ANNE STONEHOUSE AM AND OSLO DAVIS.



Have you ever been in a foreign country where you spoke none or only a bit of the language, or where the people you were talking to only understood a small portion of your communication? You ask a question or try to convey a simple message, and each attempt is met with an inappropriate response, an incomprehensible reply, or a blank stare.

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It may be a bit like this for an older baby or very young child who is learning to communicate with words, especially at the stage of stringing words and sounds together. These utterances sound like spoken language, but none of the sounds is a recognisable word. The child may be communicating about something very exciting—a bird outside the window, for example—and the adult, wanting to be responsive, tries to guess what the child is saying. ‘Yes, I know you must be hungry,’ they reply. ‘Lunch will be ready in a minute.’ It’s a good thing for adults to respond to what they think the child may be communicating. Having a go and getting it wrong is always better than not responding at all. However, not getting a sensible response can be frustrating for the child.

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