

Internet Memes As A Form Of AAC: Utilizing Web Culture to Improve Accessibility

By Spencer Hunley

About Me

- Autistic professional based in Kansas City, Missouri, USA
- Proponent of Free/Open Source Software (FOSS) and Linux, especially for use in AAC devices
- Neurologic Podcast
- Yo-yoing as a hobby in my spare time



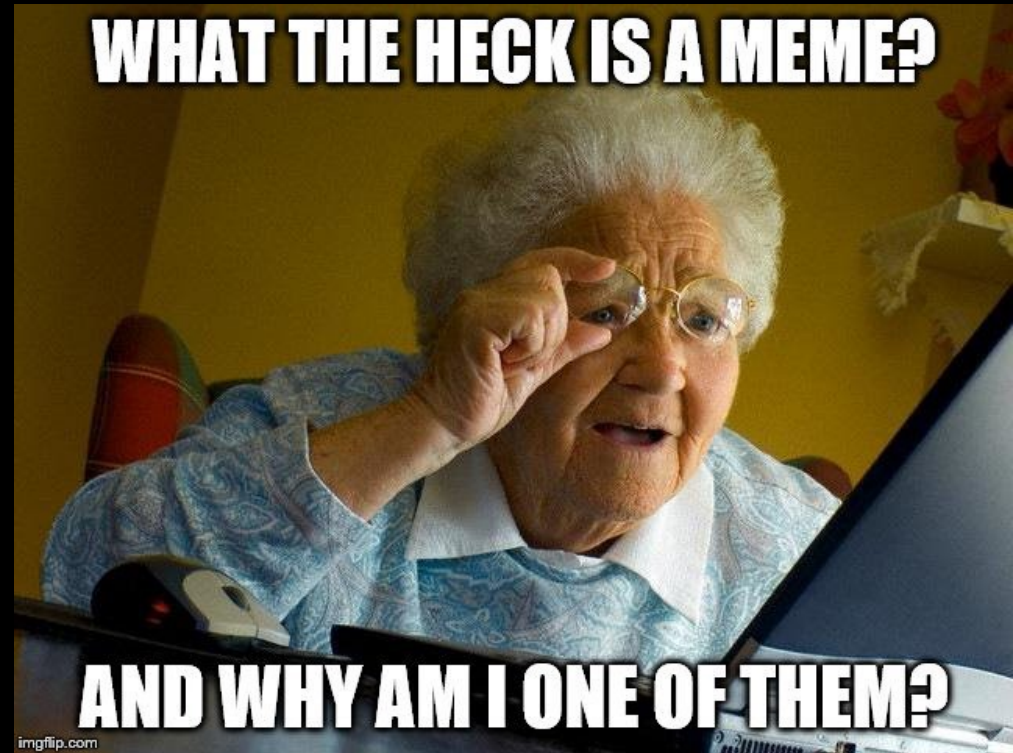
Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)

- Examples of AAC: Text To Speech, Eye Gaze Systems, Sign Language, Communication Boards, etc.
- Using memes as AAC primarily focuses on communication boards found on digital devices as well as typical interactive activities (social media posts, chat, etc).



Memes!

- A meme is an activity, concept, catchphrase, or piece of media that spreads, often as mimicry or for humorous purposes, from person to person via the Internet.
- Usually takes the form of an image, GIF or video.



Memes, a brief history of the term

- First published case of the word meme dates back to Richard Dawkins' 1976 book, *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins referred to it as a "Mimeme"—a word derived from Greek that means "that which is imitated." The word was then abbreviated to just "meme" due to its similarity to the word "gene."
- In 2013, Dawkins characterized an Internet meme as being a meme deliberately altered by human creativity—distinguished from biological genes and his own pre-Internet concept of a meme, which involved mutation by random change and spreading through accurate replication as in Darwinian selection.

How can memes be used as AAC?

- Memes are ubiquitous, and used worldwide. Even if the text isn't understood, the image itself will.
- Memes are 'free' to use and anyone can make one
- Memes draw from multiple sources and genres of popular culture; not perceived as an obvious form of AAC
- Built-in adaptability in relation to slang, culture and current events



**THIS MEME IS USED TO
DESCRIBE**



**TRAGIC AND EMBARRASSING
SITUATIONS**

TAKES DRIVING TEST



FIRST DUI



**THIS MEME IS USED TO
DESCRIBE**

**FRUSTRATIONS EXPERIENCED IN
WEALTHY COUNTRIES**

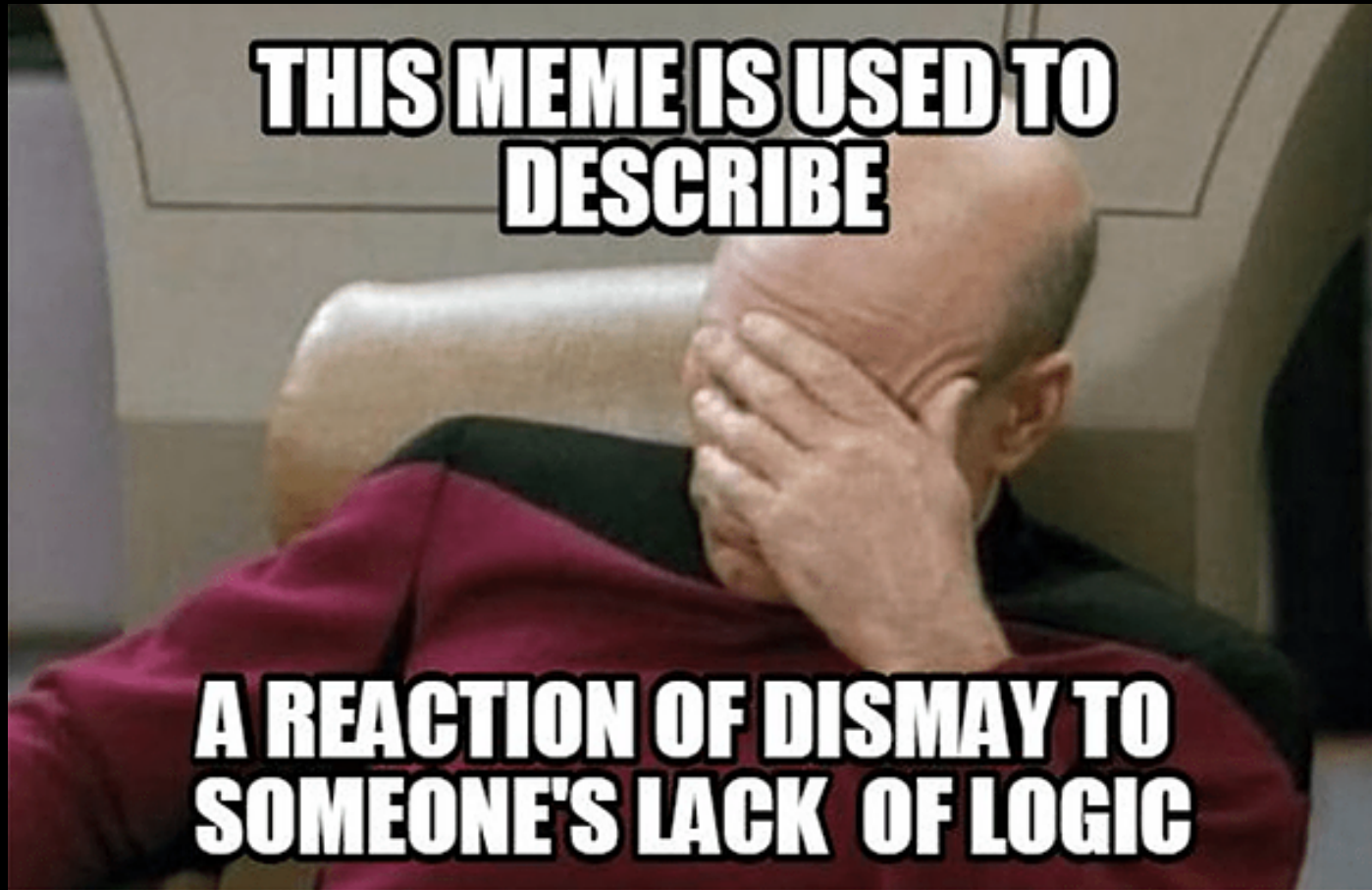


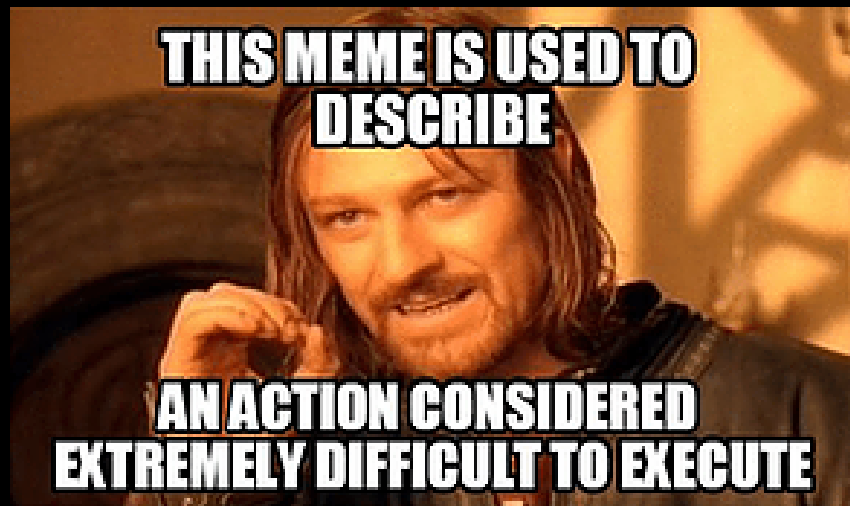
SOMEONE ON THE INTERNET

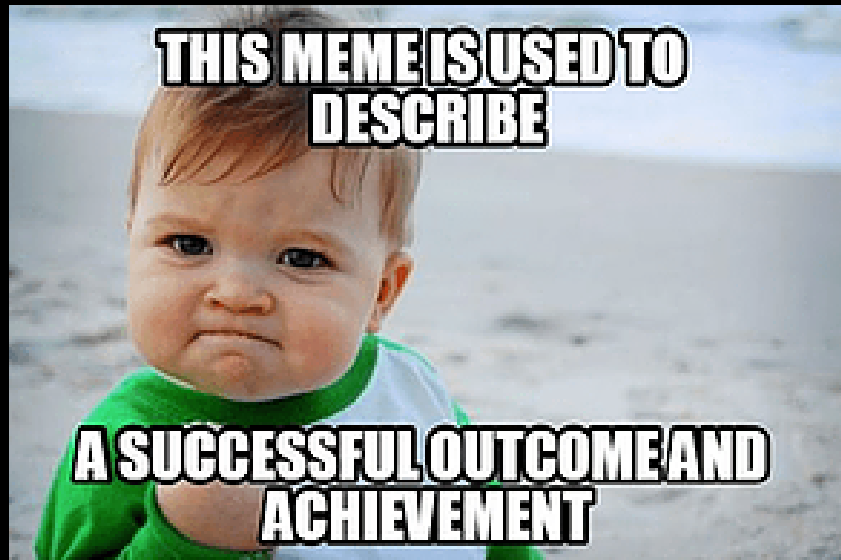
DISAGREES WITH ME

**THIS MEME IS USED TO
DESCRIBE**

**A REACTION OF DISMAY TO
SOMEONE'S LACK OF LOGIC**









Making your own memes

- Easiest way is to use a site that has templates:
 - imgflip.com/memegenerator
 - memegenerator.net/create
- Alternatively, using a still image and adding an in-image caption also works (typically using Impact-style font, but this is a guideline, not a rule)

Making your own memes: Workshop

- Using a meme creator, post a meme that fits the following theme in Discord chat – be sure to tag me @Spencer so I can show them off!
- Theme: Pandemic Lockdown
 - How did it make you feel?
 - Were you scared, anxious, annoyed, unsure of yourself?

Making your own memes: Workshop

- Using a meme creator, post a meme that fits the following theme in Discord chat – be sure to tag me @Spencer so I can show them off!
- Theme: Accomplishment
 - Think of a time where you were pleased and/or happy with what you finished (can be a basic or complex task), and symbolize that using a meme.

Making your own memes: Workshop

- Using a meme creator, post a meme that fits the following theme in Discord chat – be sure to tag me @Spencer so I can show them off!
- Theme: Autscap 2020
 - Create a meme that portrays your feelings about Autscap 2020; this could include the sudden change in format (from in-person to virtual), the schedule and program announcement, even the countdown