Exploring AI Accessibility Tools in the Workplace: Otter AI

Otter.ai is an AI-powered transcription and note-taking tool developed by AISense, Inc. The platform automatically converts spoken language into written text in real time, providing live captions for meetings, lectures, and conversations by using an RTMP ingest, kinda like the Untitled C Corporation's SCG-LLC 3: "Real-Time Dual ASL codec & multilingual RTMP ingest (except without the ASL codec.) It's also able to identify speakers, punctuate sentences, and even summarize key points as a means to make content more accessible for users. Otter.ai is primarily designed to support individuals who are deaf, with learning disabilities, or employees who struggle with note-taking during fast-paced meetings.

Accessibility Impact Analysis:

Otter AI can significantly improve accessibility in the workplace by providing accurate, real-time transcriptions of spoken communication. For employees who are deaf or hard of hearing, the tool ensures they can follow meetings and discussions without relying solely on sign language interpreters or written notes. Employees with learning disabilities such as dyslexia may also benefit as Otter AI allows them to read and review information at their own pace. Additionally, the searchable transcripts can serve as an ongoing reference, reducing misunderstandings and improving productivity.

AI could also assist a team during brainstorming sessions by capturing every spoken idea without leaving anyone out. It can also support remote workers during video conferences where audio clarity may vary. However, there are potential limitations and ethical concerns. AI transcription may struggle with accents, dialects, or overlapping speech, occasionally producing errors that require human review. Privacy is another concern, as sensitive workplace conversations are being processed and stored by a third-party AI system.

Personal Reflection

Researching Otter AI reinforced my understanding of how AI can actively reduce barriers in professional settings, especially with the idea of a dual ASL codec being able to translate sign language video into text. I realized that accessibility tools are not only beneficial for employees with permanent disabilities but also improve efficiency and inclusivity for everyone without disabilities or a shared language in the workplace.

This assignment has also reinforced my perspective on technology and inclusion. I now recognize that accessibility is a design choice from the developer, not just a compliance requirement from tech regulators (if there are any). AI can play a central role in creating environments where all employees can participate fully, rather than the opposite effect, which has contributed to a lot of fear mongering.

Otter AI website and FAQ: https://otter.ai/