Project 1: Tool Analysis - Jackson Jacobson

Tool Analysis

To support greater engagement and real-time feedback in classroom settings, I am proposing the development of a **Live Classroom Polling App**. This tool will allow instructors to quickly create and launch live polls during lessons, while students can respond instantly from their devices. The goal is to make in-class participation easier, more inclusive, and more interactive, especially in large or **hybrid classrooms**, where traditional hand-raising may not be effective. It also provides a valuable alternative for students who may feel anxious or hesitant to speak aloud, allowing them to participate comfortably and anonymously. To inform the design and functionality of this tool, I researched two widely used polling platforms: **Mentimeter** and **Kahoot**. Analyzing their features, user experiences, and limitations helped identify opportunities for innovation that can better align with classroom needs.

Mentimeter Analysis

Mentimeter is a web-based interactive presentation tool that allows users to create real-time polls, quizzes, and feedback slides. It is widely used in education and professional settings to increase audience engagement and gather instant input. Mentimeter supports a variety of question types, including multiple choice, word clouds, scales, and open-ended responses. Results are displayed in real time, often using visually engaging charts and graphs.

One of Mentimeter's major strengths is its **ease of use and visual appeal**. Instructors can quickly create polls and share a single code with students to join and participate without the need for accounts. The real-time updates make discussions dynamic, and the ability to export data afterward is helpful for reviewing results. The tool also works smoothly on mobile and desktop browsers, making it accessible to students on different devices.

However, Mentimeter has several limitations that reduce its usefulness in a classroom setting. The **free version restricts users to only two questions per presentation**, which limits flexibility. In addition, there is **no built-in way to tie responses back to individual students**, which may hinder accountability in classroom use. While the

visual designs are attractive, some users report the interface feels slightly too “corporate” or formal for younger or more casual classroom environments.

For our classroom polling app, Mentimeter offers several useful design lessons, but also highlights opportunities to improve. For example, offering more open access to question types and storing response history in a classroom dashboard could create a more education-focused version of the tool. Additionally, incorporating **anonymous participation with optional student IDs** could balance inclusivity with accountability, something Mentimeter does not currently offer.

Kahoot Analysis

Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform that allows educators to create quizzes and polls known as “Kahoots,” which students answer in real-time using their own devices. Originally designed for formative assessment, Kahoot has become a staple in classrooms due to its competitive, fast-paced format and colorful, game-show-like interface.

One of Kahoot’s greatest strengths is its **engaging and gamified experience**. The platform uses music, countdown timers, leaderboards, and colorful visuals to turn participation into a fun competition. This can significantly increase student involvement, especially for younger learners or in less interactive environments. Instructors can host live sessions or assign asynchronous games, making it flexible for both in-person and remote classrooms.

However, the same features that make Kahoot fun can also become **a distraction in more serious or structured learning environments**. The **emphasis on speed over thoughtful responses** may discourage deeper reflection, especially when used for discussion-based polls rather than factual quizzes. Additionally, students must use a game PIN and nickname to join each session, which creates extra steps and can result in confusion or inappropriate names without moderation. Another limitation is that **Kahoot’s focus is mainly on quizzes**, rather than general-purpose polling or open-ended feedback, which limits its versatility.

While Kahoot is highly effective for review and competition-based activities, it is less suited for open discussion or anonymous participation. For our classroom polling tool, the takeaway is to **retain Kahoot’s ease of access and mobile responsiveness**, while offering a calmer, more neutral experience that fits classroom settings where competition isn’t appropriate. Supporting polls with **slower pacing, anonymous responses, and more flexible question types** would make the app more adaptable to different teaching styles.

Comparison and Opportunities for Innovation

Both **Mentimeter** and **Kahoot** offer valuable features that promote student participation and real-time interaction, but they cater to different classroom needs. Mentimeter is more flexible and professional, ideal for open-ended responses and visual feedback, while Kahoot is highly engaging for quiz-based activities due to its competitive, game-like format.

However, each tool has limitations when applied to **hybrid classrooms** or students who are hesitant to speak up. Mentimeter restricts users with its free tier and lacks integration with classroom rosters or anonymous identifiers. Kahoot, on the other hand, can become too fast-paced or distracting, and doesn't support anonymous participation or open feedback formats as effectively.

These gaps present several opportunities for innovation in our project:

- **Blend open-ended polling with gamified interaction**, without the pressure of a leaderboard.
- Provide **anonymous participation** with the option to link responses to student IDs if needed.
- Enable **instructors to create and launch polls instantly**, with results saved in a session history dashboard.
- Design a **clean, calming user interface** that feels welcoming and intuitive across both mobile and desktop.
- Support **question types beyond quizzes** (like open feedback, scaled ratings, and quick check-ins), which neither tool does particularly well in combination.

By focusing on simplicity, accessibility, and inclusivity, our live classroom polling tool can stand out as a solution that bridges the gap between performance-based engagement and meaningful feedback, particularly for hybrid environments and quieter learners.