

Graphic Design and Visual Creation: The Flipped Classroom in Remote Learning in Academic Journalism Education

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This article presents a case study exploring the remote learning experience of the Graphic Planning and Visual Creation classes of a journalism course offered at the Araguaia Campus of Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso, Brazil. This study focused on the second semester of 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the active learning methodology of the flipped classroom was employed in these classes. Using a qualitative and descriptive approach, we analyze the experience of teaching practical subjects — normally taught in person in university labs using specific software programs — in a remote setting without hampering the teaching–learning process. In this case study, the students and professors used Canva as an innovative learning method to effectively create high-quality advertising and journalistic works.

Keywords: graphic planning, visual creation, remote learning, flipped classroom, journalism education.

Education in Brazil has undergone considerable changes since March 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote classes, online teaching, *lives*, and synchronous and asynchronous activities have become the classroom reality of Brazilian teachers and students.

The Brazilian Ministry of Education's Ordinance 343, which was published in the Official Gazette (Diário Oficial da União) on March 18, 2020, authorized remote learning; per the ordinance, the ministry "establishes the replacement of in-person classes for remote learning while the pandemic situation of the new Coronavirus – Covid-19 lasts."

Given this scenario, the present study aims to understand the experience of remote learning in the Graphic Planning and Visual Creation classes of the Journalism course at the Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso (UFMT)'s Araguaia Campus, which took place in the second semester of 2021. Based on the proposal of Salman as cited in Polato (2017), this study investigates the active learning methodology of the flipped classroom. According to the authors, the flipped classroom is understood as an attempt to bring traditional classes closer to the new model facilitated by technology. In a flipped classroom, activities previously conducted at school are executed at home using virtual learning environments (VLEs): "the classroom, in this model, transcends the space barrier and reframes the concept of collectivity" (Kiefer & Lampert Batista, 2020, p. 5).

Before the pandemic, practical learning using labs was prioritized for teaching graphic design of journalistic and nonjournalistic products. With the pandemic, the challenge was to find an innovative and effective methodology to ensure that students without access to computers and software programs with high-cost licenses continue to learn and do not suffer negative consequences.

This qualitative research describes a case study highlighting the active teaching methodology of the flipped classroom using the Canva website to obviate the need for using labs or high-cost software programs. To

complement synchronous classes, students could also access VLEs provided by the UFMT, which allowed access to books, journal articles, and practical tips in the form of YouTube videos regarding how to use various software.

This study demonstrates the effectiveness of the active learning methodology of the flipped classroom mainly based on students' *feedback* and their journalistic and advertising projects completed during the course. Notably, theory (regarding graphic design) and practice (using online tools) were learned synchronously and homogeneously; students could easily create their work by learning to use Canva, thus demonstrating the abovementioned active learning methodology.

Flipped Classroom and Visual Creation

It is important to note that the flipped classroom's active learning methodology was administered remotely with synchronous activities, i.e., live, mediated by technology (in the present case, via Google Meet and the Canva website). Active learning methodology involves strategies that aim to stimulate student participation and autonomy in contrast to the banking model of education (Freire, 2006), in which educators are transmitters of knowledge and students are merely its receivers. According to Dotta and colleagues (2013), the synchronous class model is an online version of face-to-face classes mediated by videoconferencing, chat, web conferencing, and other means.

Today, there are many free software options that allow synchronous remote learning, and the teacher can select the optimal option based on their preference. Some commonly used options include Google Meet, Jitsi Meet, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams. According to Keegan (1991), in remote learning, the teacher interacts with students through technological resources, such as online meetings and web conferences. Such technological resources allow teachers to create a study plan, a calendar, and dynamic and customized teaching materials.

Since March 2020, UFMT's in-person professors found themselves grappling with the challenge of adapting their work routine to remote classes, whether graduate or postgraduate, demonstrating the need for innovation in higher education. This innovation does not entail a complete

break from established educational processes; rather, it involves planning and organizing academic education to address the objective of effective learning. Veiga, Resende, and Fonseca (2007) discuss education outside formal teaching environments, favoring the exchange of knowledge between students and teachers. However, how education outside the academic environment can be streamlined remains unclear when the use of laboratories and equipment and the presence of the educator-advisor define teaching practices in the first place.

Notably, despite the use of VLEs as technical aids in in-person classes before the pandemic, translating this use to remote learning and active methodologies to teach practical classes has been a challenge. The pandemic effected a rapid change, with the student's role being transformed from that of a receiver of information to that of an active learner, adopting a reflective and active attitude toward knowledge.

According to Leandro and Côrrea (2018, p. 15), changes in the education process require discipline and being open to new methods of learning: "teacher training to remote learning, student and teacher's adaptation to the new learning platforms are some of the challenges faced." According to Moreira et al. (2020), the pandemic enabled the development of new ways to connect; educational methods, resources, and their presentation; and cooperation and individual records. The authors noted that digital tools that were previously restricted to the business world were now being used in the academic realm.

It is in this realm of classes mediated by technology that Salman's concept of the flipped classroom is found to be an active learning methodology alternative. According to Datig and Ruswick (2013), this concept involves taking content instruction outside the classroom, thus freeing class time to address questions and execute activities with teacher supervision.

In the Graphic Design and Visual Creation classes of the Journalism course at UFMT's Araguaia Campus, Google Meet was used to organize synchronous classes in the second semester of 2021; further, VLEs were used to organize the teaching material, and the Canva website was employed to support practical classes on graphic design pertaining to journalistic and nonjournalistic projects. According to Vale (2020), the use of Google Meet in remote learning enables interactivity, collaborative activities, and screen sharing, providing an effective learning environment in the classroom. Kenski (2003) states that VLEs allow for the dissemination

of knowledge through collaborative and individual activities, developing novel thinking with the use of technological equipment.

Therefore, VLEs act as channels of mediation, interaction, and collaboration between teachers and students by allowing the use of visual media (PowerPoint presentations, documents, text in PDF format, live links, and documentaries) for accessing educational material and enabling indirect student participation via institutional e-mail, forum discussions, and chats. Canva, according to Kiefer and Lampert Batista (2020), is a free and user-friendly collaborative tool for creating graphic designs for journalistic and advertising purposes.

Methodology

This qualitative descriptive research discusses a case study about students' and teachers' experience of using Canva in their Graphic Planning (6th period) and Visual Creation (8th period) classes in the Journalism course at UFMT's Araguaia Campus. The study discusses the use of Canva as an active learning methodology of the flipped classroom.

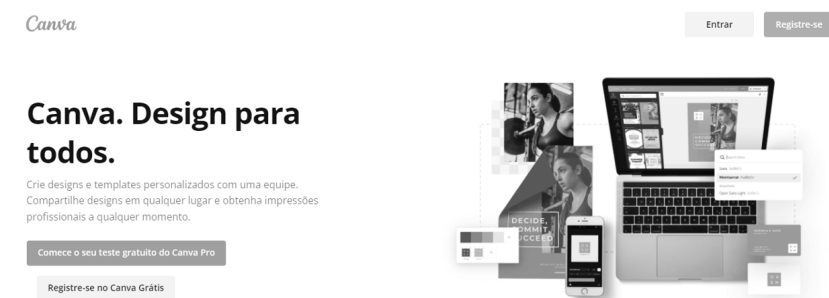
The classes were conducted twice weekly on the Google Meet platform in the second semester of the academic year of 2020–2021. The classes were offered in two phases: the first phase involved lectures on graphic design, such as the use of fonts and colors, graphic design principles, esthetic and spacing, and use of white space as a graphic element; the second phase included sessions in which students implemented practical activities of the basic to advanced levels using the Canva tool. The classes were conducted by the professor and guest lecturers via live video conferencing.

Practical Experience of Canva

Canva is a free and user-friendly website used in graphic design and social media posts. It contains ready-to-use templates, an image database, and editing tools to facilitate and accelerate the creation of digital graphic works. Archanjo and Santos (2020) explain that Canva is a graphic design tool that allows users to create social media posts, presentations, posters, office communication, and other visual content. The website can be accessed via notebooks, tablets, desktops, and smart phones. It allows editing in real time, as well as collaborative editing with a team of up to 10 people.

While the free version of Canva (<https://www.canva.com/>) was used throughout the semester, this tool also has a Pro version (Figure 1), which costs approximately R\$34,90/month. The homepage shows options for creating a project, such as page size, and ready-to-use templates.

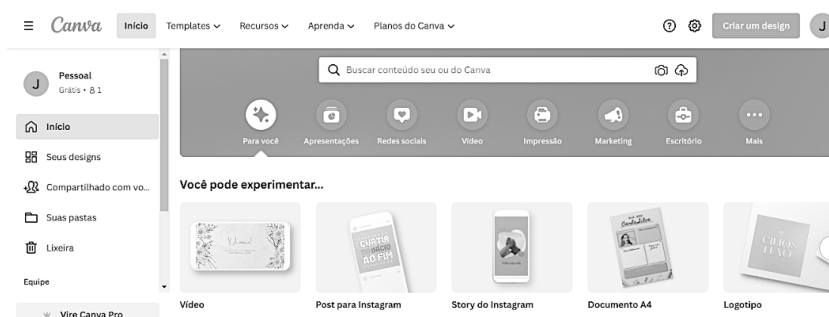
Figure 1. Canva website showing the option of free or paid registration



Source: Canva site at Google (n.d).

After choosing a version of the app (free or paid), the user is invited to select the type of project they want to start. Options such as business cards, stationery, animated presentations, posters for Instagram stories and feeds, certificates, menus, and other graphic material are listed, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Template options for graphic creation on the Canva homepage

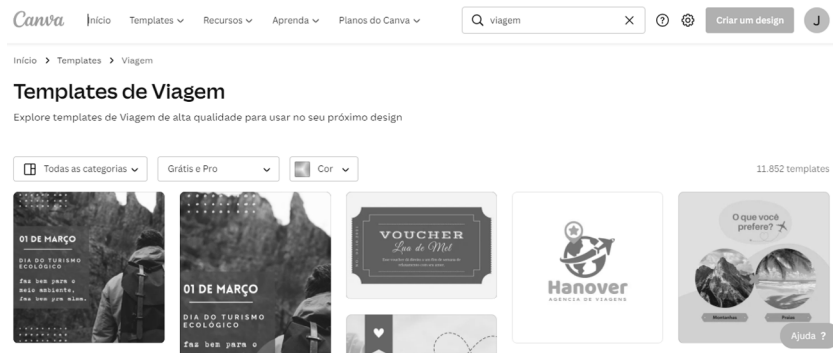


Source: Canva (n.d).

The tool allows inexperienced individuals to explore ready-to-use templates related to various themes in the free and paid versions. The tool also allows the creation of projects from scratch, that is, with a blank canvas

without a template; this can be useful for more experienced designers or those who want to produce unique creations, exercise creativity, and be daring in innovation, thereby reinforcing media and information literacy. Some ready-to-use templates can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Sample templates under the travel theme in Canva



Source: Canva (n.d).

After the phase-one lectures about the use of fonts, colors, design principles, white spaces, and other creative techniques, the students were invited to join creative workshops with guest lecturers from creative fields, such as marketing, to learn how to use every available feature of Canva. The students had approximately a month of practice along with practical exercises connected with theory, which helped them develop the critical thinking skills required in their work.

Finally, students in the Graphic Planning class created themed newspapers, and those in the Visual Creation class developed book covers, *folders*, pamphlets, and logos. Figure 4 provides examples of these projects.

Figure 4. Examples of themed newspaper layouts



"Diagramação com a utilização do app Canva"

"Conhecimento dos elementos e princípios do desing"



Source: VLE/UFMT/Graphic Planning Class (n.d).

By adopting the conventional newspaper layout, using popular journalistic language, and placing images next to text, students create newspapers written in the traditional journalistic style. As shown in Figure 4, a student used appropriate casing of words (e.g., titles were presented in capital letters) in their report on women expressing themselves freely and wearing clothes that felt good in a kind of “cry of freedom against the tyranny of thinness.”

In the mainstream press, an event will have a better chance of being news if: the individuals involved are importante [...]. In the popular press, an event is more likely to be reported if: it is entertaining, is geographically or culturally close to the reader, can be simplified, can be narrated dramatically, has character identification with readers (personalization), or is useful. (Amaral, 2006, p. 63)

Readers are attracted to mainstream media reports based on their entertainment value and geographic or cultural proximity. For local news, readers’ attraction is based on the importance of the individuals involved and the impact on the nation. By understanding these differences,

students can produce journalistic content with appropriate layouts and language to convey information to the public.

Figure 5. Examples of nonjournalistic products



Source: VLE/UFMT/Visual Creation Class (n.d).

This study aimed to demonstrate the potential application of Canva as a resource for remote learning in the UFMT's Journalism course and its practical use in the Visual Creation and Graphic Planning classes, with real examples of journalistic and nonjournalistic works of students who were using the tool for the first time. This shows the ease, speed, and relevance of using Canva in creative courses.

In the university, education requires participation and a dialogic relationship between students and between students and the professor for effective learning. We conclude by emphasizing that the dialogic interaction in the academic space shows that the classroom needs to be marked by a multiplicity of voices and not only by the voice of the teacher, being permeated by subjects who learn and who are constituted from the language and the confrontation with the otherness.

Scientific Discussion

As institutions that are open to dialogue, universities experience the challenge of identifying concrete solutions for the present and future. Universities must meet the educational needs of society using, for example, teaching and learning strategies that help students understand the content effectively. To fulfill their primary responsibility of training future professionals, universities must consider real social and technological demands (Almeida and Pimenta, 2011). They have the task of not only passing on content but also proposing strategies and uses of technological tools to ensure students' growth.

With the development of accessible and user-friendly technological tools, journalism education is no longer restrained to expensive software and physical laboratories; rather, such tools stimulate creativity and production in an accessible manner, providing significant opportunities for innovation. Therefore, the use of Canva in a remote classroom setting helped students understand that journalism is within their reach owing to technological advances, as stated by Ribeiro and Almeida (2012, p. 170): “we seek to transmit knowledge in a way that interacts with the real world we have today and with future uncertainties.”

Notably, when developing creative activities in the classroom, some aspects could be explored better, especially with regard to graphic design, introducing the tool, and ensuring harmony between text and image. However, such activities should be designed and implemented in line with other subjects and not in isolation because isolated actions generate learning without intercommunication. Possibilities for connections and interactions of these classes with other curricular components of the journalism course were noted. Morin (2006, p.16) has discussed the importance of such interactions: “knowledge becomes increasingly pertinent when it is possible to fit it into a more global context. On the other hand, if we have very sophisticated knowledge, but it is isolated, we are led to error and illusion.”

Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the experience of remote learning in the Graphic Planning and Visual Creation classes of the Journalism course at UFMT's Araguaia Campus in Brazil, which took place in the second semester of 2021, based on the active learning methodology of the flipped classroom.

The main challenge constituted ensuring effective learning in a practical class taught remotely, which was conducted in person at the Journalism course's labs before the pandemic. With the suspension of in-person classes and transition to remote activities, the practical Graphic Planning and Visual Creation classes had to be remodeled to ensure that there was no loss in the teaching–learning process. To this end, the use of the active learning methodology of the flipped classroom was essential; students performed the Journalism course's educational activities at home to gain knowledge themselves.

Synchronous classes on theory and practical workshops about using Canva contributed to the development of practical activities. Students' asynchronous work on the website helped them assimilate theory and exercise autonomy in executing their projects. Thus, the study demonstrated the effectiveness of the flipped classroom mainly through students' feedback and the journalistic and advertising works made by them as the final projects of the classes.

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