

The BREXIT and Putnam's Two Level Game Model: a teaching case experience in an International Relations class

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Abstract

Active learning is here for good. Throughout Covid-19 crisis, changes in academic teaching have become even more urgent. Nevertheless, most experienced professors may not know how to start implementing active-learning techniques to make classes more dynamic. This paper presents an experience of a teaching case application in an International Relations undergraduate course in Brazil with 14 students, aiming to encourage the adoption of this kind of tool in a teaching environment either in a face-to-face or in a virtual course, in order to improve students' learning. Teaching cases are different methodology from case studies: they allow students to analyze particular international phenomena, deepening their knowledge about theories, institutions, international actors and their decision-making process on specific issues. The Brexit process was the phenomenon that allowed us to introduce central concepts of Putnam's Two-Level Game model, such as level of negotiations (domestic or international), chief negotiator, win set, voluntary defection, involuntary defection and ratification. Self-assessment questionnaires were applied before and after the activity on students' prior and subsequent knowledge on the topic. Based on students own perception, the activity improved the understanding of all topics covered in class.

Key words: Active Learning, European Union, Foreign Policy, International Relations Theory, Brexit.

1. Introduction

International Relation courses are traditionally related to a strong theoretical load, with abstract concepts rarely presented in a concrete or practical way (Bonwell; Eison, 1991). Nevertheless, regarding the multiple competences expected for graduates, critical thinking, multidisciplinary perspective, and analytical capacity of complex phenomena, are among the most often related ones. In this sense, there is an increasing effort by scientific associations in the field¹ providing academic spaces to encourage the implementation and systematization of experiences that bring tangible scripts and results of improvement in student learning, through the implementation of tools that make learning more active and engaging.

Such tools, when applied, tested, improved and retested, helping to become classes, either face-to-face or virtual, more interesting to students and making it feasible the accomplishment of the learning objectives established by the teacher (Fink, 2013). By enabling students to become more involved in complex issues of international reality, these strategies facilitate the development of critical thinking more effectively than traditional lectures (Pinto *et al*, 2017; Pacheco *et al*, 2019), through different types of activities that stimulate reflection (Kolbi, 1984; Smith; Boyer, 1996). In principle, any method or strategy that promotes student's involvement and active participation in the knowledge building process contributes to the construction of an active learning environment. The strategy adopted here was a teaching case² developed by the Mettrica Lab³, which was structured employing images/pictures that referred to facts and actors related to the *Brexit*, the proposed international reality.

Brexit is an expression that results from the contraction of two English words, 'Britain' and 'exit' and it was attributed, and became a popular way to refer to the withdrawal process of the United Kingdom (UK) from the European Union (EU), determined by a referendum held in June 2016 and made official after intense negotiation, in January 2020. This empirical fact was chosen because it encompasses abstract theoretical concepts developed by Robert Putnam on a paper originally published in the International Organization, in 1988: "Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games", a central literature in several different courses from IR undergrad programs. Besides, it was one of the main international policy issues discussed since 2015, when a plebiscite was proposed to decide whether the UK would continue to be part of the EU (the referendum took place in 2016). It is also a subject that

¹ Such as the International Political Science Association (IPSA), the American Political Science Association (APSA), the International Studies Association (ISA), the European Political Science Network (EpsNet) and the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) to name just a few. In Brazil, the Brazilian Association of International Relations (ABRI) and the Brazilian Association of Political Science (ABCP) also created, since 2015 and 2017 respectively, thematic areas that involve the issue of education.

² The printed tutorial and the video explaining the activity is available at: <https://sites.google.com/view/mettrica-lab/cria%C3%A7%C3%B5es-do-mettrica>.

³ Mettrica Lab is a Laboratory where we test several times the dynamic we or our collaborator create.

the students had some prior knowledge, once it was widely covered by media, social networks and analyzed by experts in the field of international relations. In addition, it represents an unseen fact in the international arena: the withdrawal of a country from the most consolidated regional arrangement of the world, firstly observed with skepticism and, at the same time, astonishment of the public opinion, bearing the idea that “we are watching history being written” when the importance of a phenomenon in progress is evident.

The purpose of this article is to present and discuss the application of the teaching case, which involved a dynamic in a class with 4th period undergraduate students from IR course at the State University of Paraíba (UEPB), Brazil, in the discipline of Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA). The idea was to explore an active learning dynamic, placing students as protagonists in their learning process and, at the same time, promoting the opportunity for better understanding the aspects of a theory previously presented by the teacher. The main goal of the activity was to bring an empirical perspective from the contemporary international politics context in order to assist the main concepts of Putnam’s theory’s understanding.

This paper is organized into three parts. The first highlights main theoretical elements discussed in the activity. The second features on the international reality chosen: the UK’s withdrawal from the EU, exploring the main events of this process. Finally, a description of how it was adapted to class, detailing the applied steps, the questions posed by the facilitator in the debriefing session students, as well as the understanding of survey results applied along the dynamics. A closing section brings the final considerations from the experience.

2. Theoretical Aspects of Robert Putnam’s two-level game logic: a brief consideration

Concerned about the fragmentation that predominated in the studies on Foreign Policy, Robert Putnam published an important article in 1988, in which he presented the Logic of the Two-Level Games as an analysis proposal to understand the negotiations and decisions made by the State leaders. Putnam proposed to study the international negotiations as one set of two levels, internal (domestic) and external (international), in which the main actor involved in a negotiation, the chief negotiator, pursued the objectives traded at one level, without ignoring the other. His proposal was to build an analysis involving the interaction of both domestic and international constraints, without focusing on the quest of which level would be more relevant to the outcome of the negotiation, but how and when it happens.

Thus, the theoretical focus of the Two-Level Games is to explain international negotiations from the chief negotiator’s perspective, who is simultaneously engaged in two distinct levels of analysis aiming to coordinate domestic and international interests through bargaining without pursuing his own pretensions or preferences. This position can be

assumed by an executive chief (president or prime minister), a bureaucrat, a party leader or even an entrepreneur.

At this point, the important role of the bargaining mechanism, present in all stages of the negotiation, is highlighted and it can be characterized by efficiency or distribution. In the case of efficient bargaining, the agreements are mutually beneficial, leading to cooperation between the parties. The distributional aspect happens when one party wins more than the other does.

Putnam (1988) divided the negotiation process into two stages: level I, encompassing provisional bargained agreement by international negotiators and level II, when domestic groups decide on ratifying or not the agreement. The fact that the agreement at level I needs to be ratified at level II, means that there is a crucial link between the two of them. From this observation, the concept of win-set “as the set of all possible Level I agreements that would ‘win’ - that is, gain the necessary majority among the constituents – when simply voted up or down” (Putnam, 1988, p. 437).

For the author, there would be two reasons for the importance of the contours of sets victories the win-set size from level II, in relation to agreements at the level I. Firstly, Putnam assumptions that “larger win-sets make Level I agreement more likely, *ceteris paribus*”. Secondly because “the relative size of the respective Level I win-sets will affect the distribution of the joint gains from the international bargain.” (Putnam, 1988, p. 440). Regarding the factors that determine the win-set, three are pointed out: (i) level I preferences and coalitions; (ii) level II institutions and (iii) level I negotiators' strategies. In order to address level I preferences and coalitions, it is also necessary to mention conflicts at the domestic level, which can be homogeneous or heterogeneous, and must be treated differently by the chief negotiator.

On the one hand, when conflicts are homogeneous, the negotiator needs to earn as much as possible at level I so that his chance of ratification is expanded, his main problem being managing the discrepancy between the expectations of his support groups and the negotiable outcome. The negotiator who faces a conflict of preferences of a heterogeneous nature, on the other hand, has a more complicated task since he needs to maximize his preferences, but with some caution, because here the negotiator is at great risk of not being able to ratify the agreement. If this occurs, the smaller the winning set will be.

The set of victories also depends on the level II political institutions, and the easiest example to understand this set of victories is the process of ratifying international agreements internally. Another determinant of the winning set is the strategy of the level I negotiators. The larger the winning set, the more easily the negotiations can be concluded, but the lesser bargaining power compared to the other negotiator. If the negotiator does not have the necessary internal support, he can exploit both the parallel compensations and the goodwill of the domestic group.

Two types of defections explain cases evolving agreements established at the international level not ratified nationally: voluntary and involuntary. Voluntary defection refers to “reneging by a rational egoist in the absence of enforceable contracts” (Putnam, 1988, p. 438) while involuntary defection occurs when the agent is unable to

deliver on what he had promised due to a failure in the ratification process. It is not always easy to distinguish between the two types, as negotiators try to make voluntary defection appear involuntary, so as not to bear their political costs.

The bargaining process makes players reason non-agreement costs and the benefits of the proposed agreements. Although it is difficult to achieve the domestic groups in the other country, many diplomatic activities target that and, in some situations, end up reverberating in “domestic policy, tipping the domestic balance and thus, influencing international negotiations” (Putnam, 1988, p. 454).

Finally, Putnam discusses the role of the chief negotiator - the only formal link between the two levels analyzed - who, in an attempt to simplify his model, is described as an honest intermediary in relation to his domestic group. International negotiations are a risky and costly process for the negotiator, but he has three motivations to participate in this process:

“1. Enhancing his standing in the level II game by increasing its political resources or by minimizing potential losses [...] 2. Shifting the balance of power at Level I in favor of domestic policies that he prefers for exogenous reasons. [...] 3. To pursue his own conception of the national interest in the international context” (Putnam, 1988, p. 457).

As the negotiator's employment depends on his position at level II, he will try to “to present an international agreement for ratification, the less of his own political capital he expects to have to invest to win approval and the greater the likely political returns from a ratified agreement” (Putnam, 1988, p. 457), that is, if the negotiator opposes the agreement, he has a real veto power over it.

In section 3, the *Brexit* case is contextualized so that in section 4, the application of the theoretical aspects of the Two-Level Game in the proposed teaching case is presented, as well as the pedagogical results of the activity.

3. The scenario: the process of the United Kingdom leaving the European Union

The UK's exit process from the EU, popularized as *Brexit*, completed by the end of 2020, was chosen for the practical application of the Two-Level Game theory. The topic of regional integration is widely discussed in the Academy of International Relations and the EU is the main paradigm of a successful case. The theoretical evolution of regional integration as a field of study is based on the evolution of EU, since its first configuration, with the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (Ceca), in 1952. Efforts to theorize regional integration were largely guided by the European experience (Haas, 1958; Lindberg, 1963; Haas and Schmitter, 1964; Hoffmann, 1966; Haas, 1967; Moravcsik, 1991, 1994 and 1998, among others).

Therefore, the impact of the UK leaving the EU is remarkable for regional integration studies as it is the first time that a country has withdrawn from an arrangement that had achieved similar consistency. In addition, it represents one of the main topics of

the so-called regional disintegration theories (Schmitter, 2012; Schmitter and Lefkofridi, 2016; Jones, 2018; Hooghe and Marks, 2019) which try, precisely, to analyze the crisis of regional integration arrangements around the World.

The historical novelty of the fact increases students' attention to the class: as it is a topic covered by traditional media and social networks, there is a great curiosity about how to analyze it theoretically. Another aspect that arouses interest is the involvement of actors, phenomena and issues to be understood and explained by the social sciences: political polarization. On the one side, groups that call themselves progressives, for the most part favorable to the UK stay in EU (*remain*), on the other the so-called conservative groups, associated with the rise of an extreme right in multiple places in the world, supporters of the exit from EU (*leave*). In addition to this polarized scenario (characteristic of a plebiscite), the popularization of social networks associated with creation and propagation of so-called *fake news*, with a tight result favorable to the exit of the EU and the uncertainties about the future, we have one of the great topics of the 21st century in the studies of International Relations.

Brexit represents a perfect empirical piece of Putnam's model. The negotiation process is as an opportunity to observe the interplay between the domestic and the international levels, enabling straight connections with theoretical concepts, considered basic knowledge in the subject of Foreign Policy Analysis. Thus, the case could be interesting as a learning tool in a first contact with the theory: the phases of the negotiation process are clearly identifiable, so that the actors and concepts can be easily labeled, allowing the teacher to employ concrete examples to abstract theoretical concepts.

4. Description and Results of the teaching case application

The case was applied in an undergrad course in a first contact with Putnam's theory. The target audience comprised 14 students regularly enrolled in the Foreign Policy Analysis course, offered in the 4th period of the UEPB IR course. The experiment was carried out on October 29, 2019 and it lasted two hours. Also present in the classroom, besides teacher in charge, there were three teachers from the Mettrica Lab group (two in the role of facilitators and one in the role of observer, responsible for recording the steps and the process carried out).

The educational objectives outlined were:

- (a) approach theory to reality, based on a recent fact, which occurred in the context of contemporary international politics;
- (b) encourage students' engagement and active participation in the discussion of the paper;
- (c) consolidate the understanding of the following concepts: (i) two level-game; (ii) negotiator chief; (iii) homogeneous and heterogeneous conflicts; (iv) winset; (v) voluntary and involuntary defection; (vi) ratification.
- (d) understand a specific case selected (*Brexit*), its process and context;

- (e) observe the relationship between domestic and international politics in the case addressed;
- (f) encourage awareness of that phenomena of international politics can (and should) be better understood with the help of a theoretical framework.

It is important that students read the original text in advance and take an expository lesson on the most important concepts from the text. Therefore, the goal was to introduce main concepts and not necessarily accessing the depths of the original text. In the specific application experience in focus, students were taught main theoretical concepts through a seminar in the classroom, conducted by the teacher responsible for the discipline, in the previous week⁴. The activity was applied the week after the seminar, with the suggestion of reading the article in addition to specific material prepared by the teacher on *Brexit*, elaborated by news from broad media coverage sites such as BBC and El País.

4.1 Material

The material was prepared with images representing actors and facts related to the negotiations *Brexit* and cards with the concepts discussed. The printed images represent: (1) the British Parliament; (2) the campaign of the plebiscite and (3) the voting day, on both sides: (4) "leave" and (5) "remain"; and actors generally related to the process (it is suggested to put the name below the image), such as (6) David Cameron, (7) Theresa May, (8) Boris Johnson, (9) Queen Elizabeth; symbol of currencies (10) pound and (11) euro; (12) the EU flag (13) shaking hands (referring to the idea of an agreement being made) and (14) social networks. The concepts discussed through the proposed activity that were printed on cards were: a) two-level game; b) chief negotiator; c) homogeneous and heterogeneous conflicts; d) winset; e) voluntary and involuntary defection; f) ratification.

In addition to the printed material, it is also necessary to have adhesive tape (to secure the images on the board); classroom with frame or wall where the material can be fixed. Finally, copies of the front-back questionnaires (attachment) were printed for all students.

4.2 Execution of the Activity

The dynamics were performed as follows:

Step 1:

Before starting the activity, students answered an understanding questionnaire (version before), in which they should score, from 1 to 5, their level of understanding about each of the theoretical concepts, which had been previously studied. The next step

⁴ In the experience of applying the activity, the teacher promoted a seminar taught by other students, which may have generated an element of dispersion and consequently biased learning of main theoretical concepts. Therefore, in order to achieve a greater control over the quality of the material presented, it is recommended the teacher to present the topic in an expository class that discusses the text in a more objective and detailed way.

was to organize students into groups (A and B), limiting to a number that enables participation, in the case in question 7 students each.

Step 2:

The printed images were placed on the table and it was asked group A to create a narrative on the subject, employing only images deemed necessary, with a proper explanation of the group's choice. At this time, the cards with the theoretical concepts have not been introduced. Group A chose the images, fixed them on the board, and explained their version of *Brexit*. Then, group B, who had attended the presentation, was asked to verify the images chosen by group A, and to reorganize the order of/or exchange images, narrating, then, their version of the facts. It is suggested that each group had a maximum of 15 minutes of time to elaborate their narrative. Narrative changes are made between the two groups perhaps worthwhile to be highlighted and explored in the debriefing session.

Step 3:

A new group was formed, composed by 3 students of group A and 3 from group B. Then, the new groups received the cards with the theoretical labels. They were asked to rearrange the process (if they found it necessary) employing the concepts to the figures. After the time lapse, all students in the class were involved in the discussion reasoning their choices.

Step 4:

The facilitators led a debriefing section recovering, contrasting and correcting dissonant theoretical misunderstandings. Table 1 presents the teaching notes with a list of questions employed. At this point, the teacher had the opportunity to align the concepts and correct inaccuracies identified during the activity. From the discussion of the groups, we realized that some students still had the wrong understanding or simply did not know the categories of analysis, especially at the point of identifying the negotiator chief in the case of *Brexit*.

Table 1. Script for the Debriefing

Questions	Elements of discussion with students
1. Were there any difficulties in organizing the images? If the answer is positive, which ones?	Discussion of the difficulties faced when organizing a narrative in which some information is already given (such as images, for example).
2. When organizing, did you already have the logic of two-level games in your head, or were you just concerned with the chronological organization?	Discussion of the difficulties in fitting something that is happening in the contemporary world with theoretical abstraction.

<p>3. When associating the figures with the theoretical concepts, did you find any difficulty in remembering what each one meant?</p>	<p>Approach to each of the proposed concepts. For example, who was the chief negotiator? The prime minister? A tip for discussion is, in this case, to resume the characteristics of the negotiator chief identified by Putnam. For example, (i) he needs to be on both boards and (ii) he wants to seek an understanding.</p> <p>In this topic, we have three potential characters: David Cameron, Theresa May, and Boris Johnson. Who can be classified as chief negotiator according to the category indicated? Who cannot? Exploring these concepts in relation to the three actors was an important exercise in understanding the category of analysis.</p>
<p>3.a) Approach to concepts:</p>	<p><u>Two Level Game:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identification of when, effectively, we can speak on two levels. Pay attention to the fact that it is after the plebiscite that the negotiation for the withdrawal starts to happen in the international and domestic scope. - Who are the actors at each of the two levels? <p><u>Chief Negotiator:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - One or several? According to Putnam's concept, could Queen Elizabeth be considered as such? - What about the prime ministers who appear during the period of analysis (Cameron, May and Johnson)? Cameron left after the result of the referendum, May have effectively negotiated, and was Johnson interested? Has he become a chief negotiator at some point? <p><u>Voluntary and involuntary defection</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could May's exit from the negotiations be considered a defection? What kind? <p><u>Win-set</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was negotiated between May, for example, and the EU and what terms were accepted or rejected when taken to the British Parliament? - How did the negotiation of the text of the agreement take place? May managed to approve an agreement? - What did or Johnson achieve (or did not) into the agreement? <p><u>Homogeneous and heterogeneous conflicts</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the problems encountered by the chief negotiator in relation to the EU? Can you identify

	<p>any characteristics of homogeneous and/or heterogeneous conflicts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the problems encountered between the chief negotiator and the domestic actors (parties; important individuals in the process)? Can you identify any characteristics of homogeneous and/or heterogeneous conflicts? <p><u>Ratification</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Was there a ratified agreement? If so, in what terms? - Who are the actors responsible for international and domestic ratification? - What were the impacts of a ratification or rejection on this process?
<p>4. How different IR theories can interpret the case in focus?</p>	<p>Here the teacher, depending on the subject, can explore the case a little more, in addition to the initial text.</p>

Step 5:

Finally, the students answered the same comprehension questionnaire, applied at the beginning of the activity, but in a blank version (version After), in order to capture the students' self-perception regarding the evolution in the understanding of each one theoretical concept, based on the case worked in the classroom.

4.3 Analysis of Results

The choice to apply self-assessment questionnaires (attachment 1) to capture the perception of the evolution of students' understanding on the topics worked aims to verify whether the applied activity had any practical benefit in understanding the theoretical content. There is a recognition that measuring self-perception does not necessarily implies that the activity was learning effective. For a more in-depth analysis, it is necessary to use other evaluation and measurement instruments, including with some type of pre and post-tests. Nevertheless, the main target was to assess the student's experience with the activity, their perception about their gain content and even on their recognition of the importance of active engagement in the learning process. In addition, the pre-questionnaire served as an indicator of the level of previous theoretical knowledge from the students.

The main question was: *How do you consider your knowledge of the following topics related to the text "Diplomacy and Domestic Policy: the logic of two-level games", by Robert Putnam?*

In the questionnaire, the student should assess his/her understanding of the topics of the text, classifying his/her answer on a scale of 1 to 5. The topics included: (i) Two-

level game; (ii) win-set; (iii) chief negotiator; (iv) voluntary and involuntary defection; (v) homogeneous and heterogeneous conflicts; and (vi) ratification.

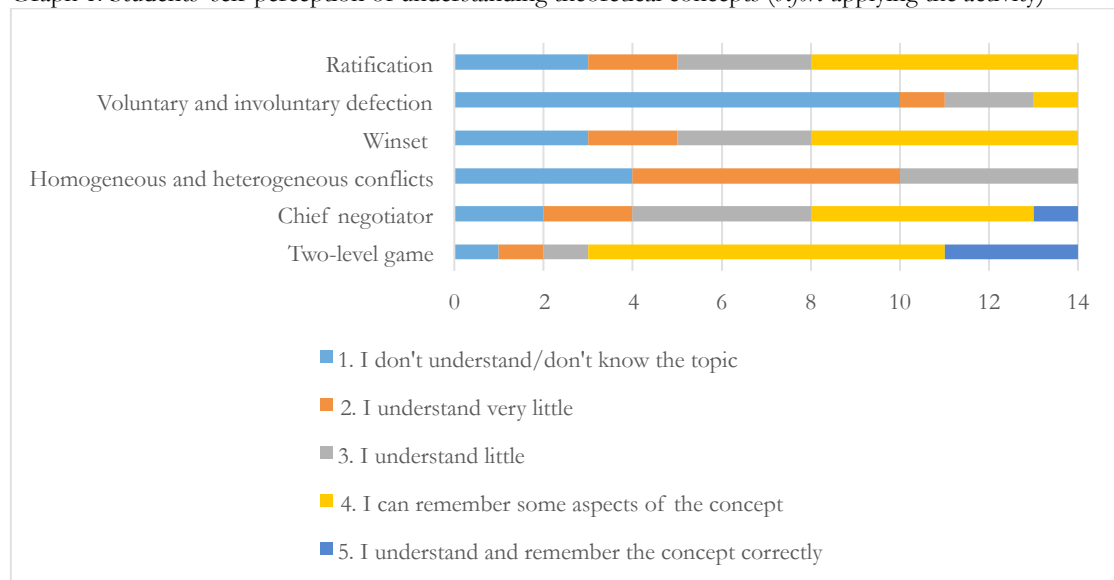
For each of the themes, the student should check one of the following values, according to what he considers most appropriate to his understanding of the theme:

1. I do not understand/do not know the topic.
2. I understand very little.
3. I understand little.
4. I can remember some aspects of the concept.
5. I understand and remember the concept correctly.

The questionnaire was printed in such a way that the same student filled out the same sheet at both times of the activity: in the front, before the activity, on the back, after the application of the activity. The students created codenames, instead of answering the activity with their names, in order to ensure anonymity. Dealing with perception involves assuming that the student is the most honest with himself, after all, if they answer that they understand everything, in all the criteria used, we will not have an expressive result of the validity of the applied dynamics.

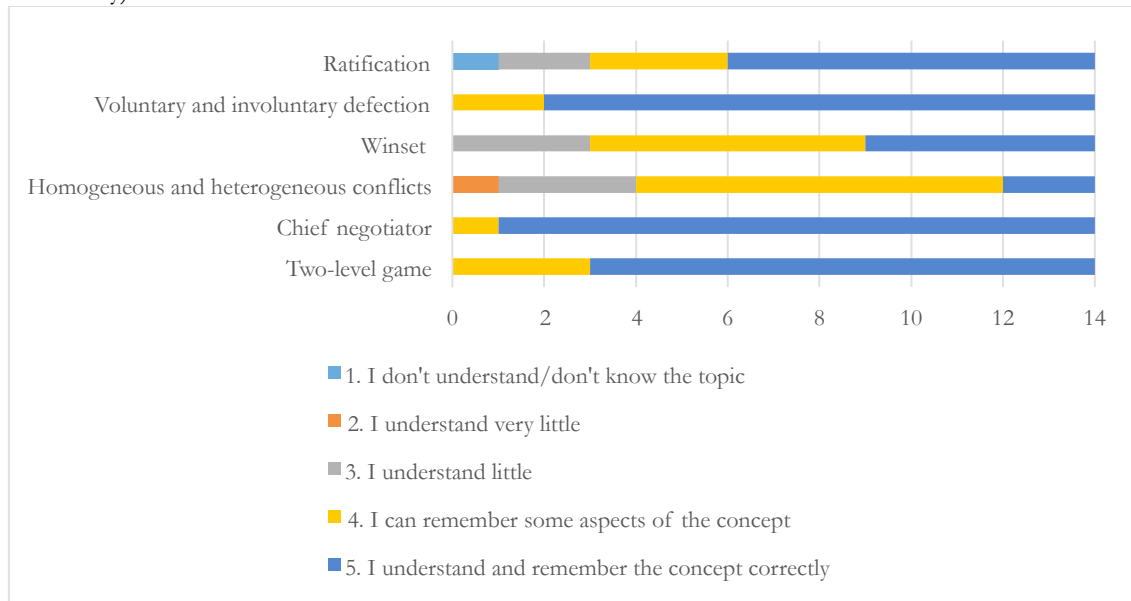
Graphs 1 and 2 show, respectively, the result of the perception questionnaires with the students' answers, before and after the activity. It is important to highlight the fact that although it was applied at the beginning of the application of the case, the students had participated in a seminar in a previous class on the theoretical content.

Graph 1. Students' self-perception of understanding theoretical concepts (*before* applying the activity)



Source: own elaboration.

Graph 2. Students' self-perception about the understanding of theoretical concepts (*after* the application of the activity)



Source: own elaboration.

The results suggest that, before the application of the case, while the vast majority of the students remembered some aspects of the concepts such as "two-level game", "winset" and "ratification", the same cannot be said about "voluntary or involuntary defection", a concept that 71% of students indicated they did not understand or did not know. Note that these results point to self-assessment (perception) and not an objective assessment.

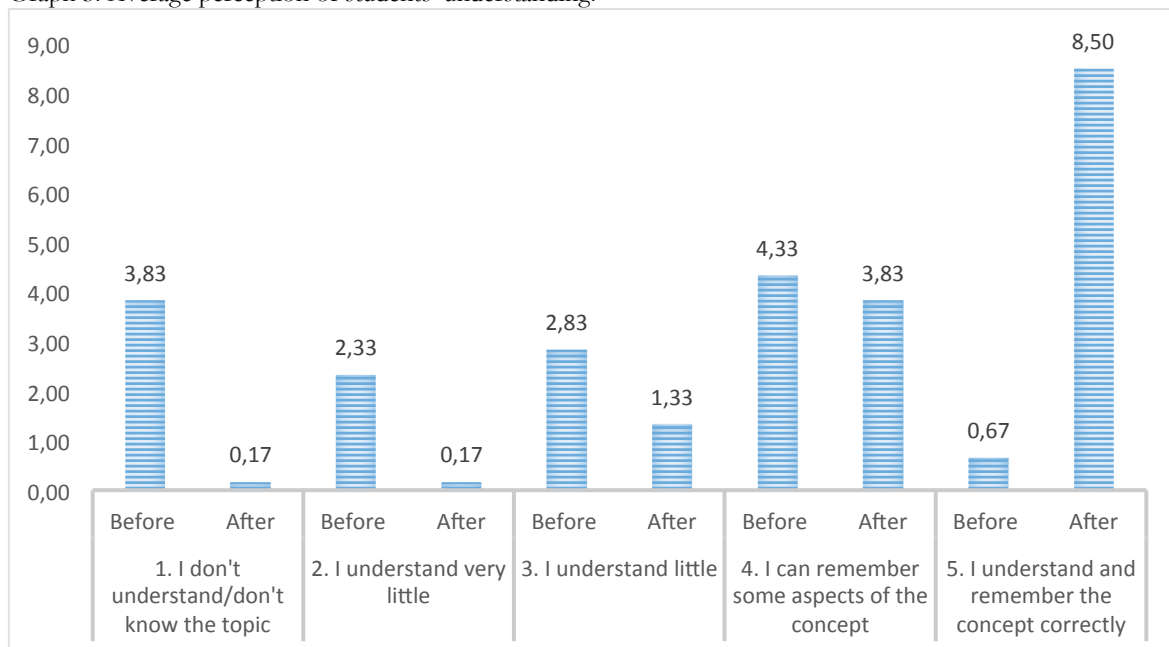
On the concept of "Two Level Games", for example, before the application of the case, a student pointed out that he did not understand the topic, another that he understood "very little", one that his understanding was little, eight students said they could remember some aspects of concept and 3 considered to understand it well and correctly.

In general, there was an improvement in self-assessments of understanding of all concepts. It is not possible to infer an objective improvement in students' knowledge level; precisely because other assessments need to be done in order to substantially evaluate the performance of the activity, including a control group not performing the same activity. The results suggest that the students considered that the applied activity increased their understanding of the studied categories. The highlight was the category 'voluntary defection', before the activity, unknown to 10 students and, after the activity, 12, out of 14 students (85.7%) declared that they understood well and remembered the concept correctly. It is also significant the previous self-understanding of the concept "homogeneous and heterogeneous conflicts". Before the activity, 10 students declared they did not know or know "very little" about the concept and, afterwards, the same number of students declared that they would be able to "remember some aspects of concept" (8), or "understand and remember the concept correctly" (2). The other concepts also had their understanding expanded, although to a lesser extent.

Graph 3 shows the average evolution of the perception of improvement in students' understanding: while there was an average reduction of 95.6% of

students declaring that they did not understand or did not know the concepts after the activity, there was an average increase of 1175% in the number of students who declared to understand well and remember the concept concretely.

Graph 3. Average perception of students' understanding.



The analysis also proved to be effective not only in terms of fixing the content and stimulating students proactivity, but a valuable tool on the process of building students' learning. With the pre-test results, the teacher is able to identify possible aspects that can be improved, subsidizing a more efficient discipline planning.

Let us quickly recall the stages of the dynamic: (1) Organizing students into two groups. Group A organized selected images on the board, creating a timeline of how the *Brexit* process would have gone under their perspective. Group B reorganized images, reorganizing some facts, according to their own understanding of the events occurrence. Intuitively, both groups organized the images in something similar to a timeline, from the referendum decision to the negotiations for the exit. After this organization, we created a third mixed group with three participants from each previous group and asked them to put attribute cards with theoretical concepts along the timeline. As each group narrated the events from the images, the previous understanding of concepts that seem to be more intuitive, such as the chief negotiator, for example, became noticeable. In the first group, the students quickly placed Theresa May at the center of the quest. The association is correct, but it was necessary to understand whether the students had understood the theoretical concept or they were merely associating with the semantic sense of the term.

According to Putnam (1988) the chief negotiator is “a leader present on both [domestic and international] boards, has no independent political preferences, but seeks to find an understanding that will be attractive to his bases”. In the debate, after organizing

the images and concepts on the board, we asked if Boris Johnson, for example, could be considered the chief negotiator at that time. The general answer was: “yes!” At that point, the teacher realized that students thought that the chief negotiator would be any individual who assumed the position of Prime Minister of the UK. Consequently, this was an opportunity to cover main theoretical concepts, once the chief negotiator needs to accept the function, he would need to be on both boards, and his political preferences could not “contaminate” the process. By then, Boris Johnson was not only out of the negotiations, but declared a very radical position for Brexit. Even an apparently well understood concept needed to be corrected. Some students even declared: “I thought I knew this concept, but now I realized I was wrong”.

The concepts that required a deeper understanding, such as win set and homogeneous and heterogeneous conflicts, made students more hesitant. The groups showed difficulty in inserting such concepts within their narratives. Only after facing difficulties to solve the puzzle of connecting concepts to images, students realized that important theoretical topics were not well understood but could be properly covered during the debriefing.

Although students signed an improvement in the understanding on the subject, we realized that there were some gaps in the understanding of theoretical text. Besides, students did not delve into details of the exit process, detailing the negotiations for each of the meetings between the UK and EU. Nevertheless, the goal of the activity was not deepening in the case of *Brexit* itself but engaging them in applying a theoretical framework to a concrete event analysis.

5. Final considerations

In order to bring a practical case for the analysis of concepts of the Logic of the Two-Level Games, the students had the challenge to understand historical facts related to *Brexit*, using the theoretical categories, in order to have contact, in a didactic environment, with the complexities and ambiguities inherent in international politics.

The application of the *Brexit* case allowed students of the Foreign Policy Analysis discipline of the fourth period of International Relations to leave their passive condition, becoming active in the dynamics, as described in steps 1, 2 and 3 of this activity. The teacher responsible for the subject reported that the students were not very participative, but they were very engaged during the proposed activity. In the first stage, which involved the students' narrative about the proposed theme, the students were helpful and engaging.

The use of an active learning dynamic has the potential to identify flaws in the construction of knowledge, both for students and for the teacher. In a way, in this activity, students realized that they obtained a gain in quality when comparing what they had assimilated before, and how they assessed this knowledge after the activity was performed.

For the teacher, this experience worked not only to get to improve an informal approach with students, but also to understand the capacity of organization and intellectual systematization of a subject discussed in the classroom, as well as to evaluate and identify

possible theoretical gaps that needed to be overcome. Still, the activity consisted in one innovative tool to evaluate, on an ongoing basis, the assimilation of the theoretical contents. To the students, it served as a concrete example that theoretical approaches are essential to analyze international political phenomena, bringing theory closer to practice. In addition, they were able to understand that knowledge is built, and that engagement may improve their learning.

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