Scenarios: A new perspective for critical speaking in EFL contexts

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Abstract

*D*ue to a growing interest in scenarios, and considerable investment in the EFL contexts, the current study examines the relationship between scenarios and language learning with particular reference to critical speaking skills. It provides a semi detailed review of literature on scenarios: definitions, pedagogical approaches, elements, types, objectives, characteristics of good scenarios, and creating scenarios. It reports on scenarios in EFL contexts shedding light on language teaching, authentic learning and knowledge management, ending with the practical use of scenarios in education. Under the title that reads critical speaking skills, the researcher documented some attempts for developing critical speaking skills – that he could reach. For integrating scenarios and critical speaking skills, the study provides some guiding teaching scenario-based situations, followed by discussion for implications for applied linguistics. And finally, the study ends with the conclusions reached, some recommendations to be considered, and some suggestions for further research.

Keywords: scenarios, critical speaking, EFL contexts.

Introduction

Scenarios and scenario building mark the evolution of means for future studies in different fields such as military sciences, simulated war games, strategic planning and business and strategic management, operations research, risk analysis, community management, environmental assessment, and social ecology. Since Robert Di Pietro (1987) issued his book entitled *Strategic Interaction,* scenarios have been used in educational settings as an innovative teaching method/strategy for developing English language skills.

Yet there is a need for a short review on different definitions of scenarios, pedagogical approaches to scenarios,

scenario elements, types of scenarios, objectives of Scenarios, characteristics of good scenarios, creating scenarios, scenarios in EFL contexts, critical speaking skills, integrating scenarios and critical speaking, implications for Applied Linguistics.

Review of Literature

Scenarios: an overview

It is widely known among many researchers (e.g. Benammar et al. 2006; Grossmann, 2006; Mason, 2008) that scenarios were originally developed in the military in the United States after the World War II. Since then, scenarios have taken different definitions for different purposes. According to Holroyd, et al. (2007); Mason, (2008); Muller, (2000); Seigel, (2005) and some others , the scenario is a description of a possible set of events that might reasonably occur, or it is a story that can be told by someone to another. Such a story has characters and a series of episodes of scenes taking place in a specific line of time. Those characters interact using different strategies in various scenes in order to affect each other.

That view is similar - to some extent - to that the scenario is as a "method" of teaching English developed by Robert Di Pietro (1987) where students are placed in a hypothetical situation which they can act out. By this, the strategic interaction (SI) takes place. Once the SI is activated, better communicative competence in English as a target language is boosted.

Also, scenarios are believed to be tools for analyzing awkward situations, problem solving and decision making (Frencken, 2003; Inayatullah, 2002; Plausible Futures Newsletter, 2006); for communicability in which the two poles of communication interact to share information, to socialize, to amuse or to convince (Seigel, 2005); for objective assessment in which different measures are used to validate what's on objectively (Mayotte, 2006).

The scenario can be seen as *a process* (e.g. Erickson, 1996; Jocobson in Muller, 2000). That process might include reading, thinking and research, and it may require a sharp focus on

objectives of analysis as well as design. According to Mason (2008) the scenario might be a process that begins with reflecting on and reflecting about the stable beliefs we have, the reference frameworks we structured   and the mindsets we developed, and then checking our generalizations and reflecting in how we got affected by them besides how we transform to new situations.

In the same stream of thought, Benammar et al. (2006) consider the scenario as *a method* for examining our present and how we transform to our future following certain processes. From different lenses, some researchers (e.g., Snock, 2001; Snock, 2003; Wikipedia, 2008) see the scenario *a methodology* for stimulating long-term decision making, or a methodology for interpreting trends and considering probabilities of changes and uncertainties, or a strategic planning method; *a technique* for developing better plausible strategies for the future (Wulf et al.,2010), *a tool* that can help us to better understand what the future might look like and the likely challenges of living in it (ATEE RDC CURR-TE ,2008; Vergas, 2016) ; while Gaffney sees the scenario as *a description* of a person's interaction with a system .

For educational settings, scenarios are seen as *a teaching strategy* (Alsup & Bush, 2003; Hilton, 2003). They are used for improving an interactive system for cognitive disabled people at the University of Lleida in Spain, (Badia et al., 2007); developing in-service writing course for teachers and teacher education, (Boven, 2007); investigating different issues of social ecology for better decision-making (Grossmann, 2006); teaching a statics course for engineering students, (Marippan et al., 2004) ; assessing decision-making skills of health science undergraduate students, Martin (2008); fostering strategic decision- making skills, (Rhisiart el al., 2015); developing teamwork skills (conflict resolution and communication strategies), Paulus et al., (2006); providing e-learning choices for New Zealand tertiary students, Stewart (2007); developing learner's critical and creative problem solving, Wise (2006); Much is to help people via

interactive stories - whatever the content is –to adjust mental models for considering unthinkable futures instead of thinking in the box, Colburn (1998).

Pedagogical Approaches to Scenarios

One of the main features - according to the researcher – that characterize scenarios is its theoretical breadth and depth ,i.e., scenarios are directly and indirectly associated with or/and bank upon various assumptions and theories. They are also structured or/and interpreted in the realm of different approaches. Besides, they integrate theory with practice. Benammar et al., (2006) suggest three possible <u>approaches</u> to using scenarios in an educational setting: research-based, product-based, or interaction-based. In a research-based approach, the development of research methods encourages students to explore and utilize a variety of research tools. A product-based approach emphasizes the production of feasible, well-written and well-justified scenarios. The third approach – an interaction-based approach – emphasizes the quality of the interactions between students, focusing on developing a common understanding, and negotiating meanings plays a central role. "The choice of approach or emphasis is up to the individual facilitator and will depend on the context and the students. When all three approaches are combined, the scenarios methods are a powerful educational tool" (Benammar et al. 2006, p3).

From another view point, Saussois (2006) sets certain steps that constitute the scenario approaches: delimitations of the 'object" to be observed, identification of key driving variables, both external and internal, and defining strategies of the main actors, and proposing action plans.

Scenario-based learning (SBL) – in the researcher's belief – seems to combine many different pedagogical approaches of teaching and learning. They serve as principles on which SBL depend. Some of those approaches clarifying what students can do and achieve are:

a. <u>Case Method</u>: According to this approach, students are encouraged to participate in discussing difficult live

situations. Each situation constitute a case , and students need to take decisions and resolve problems. In order to achieve those objectives, they name the problem, frame it, suggest and reflect on alternative solutions, share ideas on the most appropriate solution, then approve it (Jacobson, 1995; Strachan, 2013)

b. <u>Task-Based Approach:</u> Learners are given opportunities to practice the target language through language activities to function it practically in authentic situations.(Ahmadian, 2016)

c. <u>Possibility–Space Approach</u>: In the realm of this approach, students discover new relationships, create several probabilities, then provide alternative options that appear to be possible for new scenarios for issue solutions.

d. <u>Deliberative Approach</u>: Students are engaged in democracy-based group logical discussion about an authentic issue targeting to reach a consensus for guiding the decision- making process.

e. <u>Reflective Learning</u>: Students think of their mistakes, learn from them and recreate their choices differently (Clark, 2015)

f. <u>Situated Learning</u>: Students create meaning in a certain real context collaborating with specific participants, discovering relationships that govern different situations in that context ,and then producing practical problem solving (Young, 1993).

g. <u>Authentic Learning:</u> Upon this approach, students are exposed to authentic problems in their real life. They are given authentic activities, armed with expert multiple perspectives, and elicited, guided, directed and scaffolded by their teachers to reflectively collaborate with their mates for handling problem-based scenarios (Tupe, 2015).

h. <u>Active engagement and imaginative inquiry:</u> As for this approach, students are engaged to interact in groups to share knowledge and imagine new perceptions that might help in problem solving (Tocher and Smith, 2008).

From another lens, Kemp-Benedict (2006) views that there are two scenario approaches tackling how to design scenarios:

qualitative and quantitative. The qualitative approach is to represent "complexity" that is the subject of complex systems theory. It refers to the behavior arising from the interrelations of different components of a system, a feature of real system that helps make the world so interesting. This approach – as Kemp-Benedict stresses – is best dealt with in narratives, and the narratives should focus on the complex nature of the system and on its evolution. This is because "people are good at modeling complexity in real social systems" (p.2).

On the other hand, the quantitative approach is to represent "complicatedness" that means the sort of bookkeeping that is necessary when there are a lot of factors to keep in mind – constraints, actors, and resources, i.e. keeping track of physical-economic social relationships that can influence a scenario. Thus, this approach is best dealt with using computers.

Despite the considerable work that has been done considering the interaction between quantitative and qualitative contributions, Kemp-Benedict (op.cit.) argues that "there is no consensus on how to go about synthesizing qualitative and quantitative scenario approaches" (p.1). With that, he suggests five main roles that qualitative scenario development can play when implemented in response to a narrative:

1. Force a clarification of terms and mechanisms.
2. Expose contractions in mental models.
3. Provide a feel for the scope of possible outcomes within a narrative framework.
4. Illustrate a particular scenario narrative.
5. Make a study replicable, extensible and transferable. (p.3)

Elements of Scenarios

According to the objectives the scenarios might achieve, different researcher suggest varied elements of different scenarios in different settings. The Third World Forum (1998) put the elements into three: initial conditions, consequences of initial conditions along time and future image. Grossmann (2006) provided five elements which constitute – in his view – an effective scenario. They are driving forces, central fields, actors,

critical and predetermined and certain elements, and boundary conditions. For a normal login to the PMSystem, triggers, system reactions, waiting delays, guard realizations and assertions constitute the elements of a sequenced scenario process, (Stephane, 2007). Memecon(2012) takes another stream. According to this site, basic conditions are not but described in two different modes of information: objective information (numbers, data, facts), and subjective information (estimations, rumors, opinions). Leiner et al.,(2012) identified four elements: (a) current world that describes the statuesque or the situation already exists, (b) the plot or story that means the sequence of actions that constituted knitted the problem or the plot for which the scenario should be created, (c) logics that refer to the reasons or rationales behind the issue or the problem, and finally (d) the end state that depict the conditions targeted and the circumstances intended.

Types of scenarios

Exploring the type of scenarios, the researcher found that different types have been investigated according to different perspectives with different criteria that scientists in areas of specialization including educationists employ in their judgment of scenario developing or scenario using. El-Issawy (1998) classifies the scenarios into two main types according to their intention. They are *exploratory* (reference/business as usual, probable, possible) and *desired or preferable*, while Goldet (op.cit) sees them as: (a) reference scenario, (b) trend-based scenario, (c) most probable, and (d) contrasted scenarios.

Bruun et al. in Grossmann (2006: p.4) classify scenarios into four main types according to the 2-dimensional categorization: event-based conventional scenarios, event-based unconventional scenarios, trend-based conventional scenarios, trend-based unconventional scenarios. While according to the range of possibilities, Cornish cited in Holroyd et al., (2008) suggest five types of scenarios: a surprise-free scenario, an optimistic scenario, a pessimistic scenario, a disaster scenario, a transformation scenario. And each scenario can be evaluated

according to the probability of each becoming reality and ranked according to its desirability. If an undesirable scenario is plausible, it can stimulate discussion on requirements to mitigate the impacts and change management decisions.

The Insurance Regulation Committee of the IAA (2013) states that there is a wide range in the types of scenarios that can be used with different uses and applications: Reverse scenarios, Historical scenarios, Synthetic scenarios, Company-specific scenarios, Single-event scenarios, Multi-event scenarios, Global scenarios. In his "Focus on the future of vocational education and training: scenario planning project", Johnston (2002) classifies scenarios in terms of the situations explored. In situation one, a clear enough future can be identified, either because one can confidently extrapolate from the current position or because the underlying determining structure or causes are known. Situation two is one in which a limited number of discrete outcomes define the future. Situation three is more appropriate when there are many situations in which possible futures, cannot be reduced to a series of discrete possible futures. Situation four addresses circumstances of total ambiguity, in which there is no basis for planning the future.

According to Di Pietro in Colburn (1998) there are four types of scenarios based on the roles played.

1. The basic scenario/ The Two Role type. It is suitable for one encounter. In a group situation, there are two groups and each has a spokesperson who interacts on behalf of the whole.
2. Multiple- Role scenarios are useful when different direct roles are assigned to different parties where each role has a distinct reason for being involved.
3. In Group scenarios, all students react in their own ways to an event or situation that involves or affects everyone in the group.
4. Open-Ended scenarios promote the development of long-term roles and interrelated episodes that may span a number of class sessions.

In order to achieve <u>learning purposes</u>: (a) skills-based scenarios where students practice/reinforce known acquired skills; (b) problem-based scenarios where students meet with challenging scenarios and are required to make decisions, research information, and arrive at informed conclusions; (c) issues-based scenarios where students explore perspectives on an issue, assume positions themselves and justify/present informed positions and, (d) speculative-based scenarios where students generate hypotheses about past, present or likely future events from given/researched information. All four options lend themselves readily to a range of language interactions, providing immediate and common shared experiences that students can discuss, analyze, evaluate, and reflect on. Whatever type of the scenario is, it cannot be divorced from being "a positive scenario" where the interactions and relationships created or even discovered should be supported, or " a negative scenario" where the interactions and relationships created or even discovered should be avoided.

Objectives of Scenarios

Scenarios provide opportunities for students as well as teachers to practice and function more than one skill, discover correlations or even integrate skills within the context of scenarios. Many researchers explored those aspects in different views. For the various views are not few, some of them are to be noted down. As for students, scenarios …

- help them understand the uncertainties that lie before them, and what they might mean. It helps them 'rehearse' our responses to those possible futures. And it helps them to spot them when they begin to unfold, (Bawden, 2008; Stomp and Klein , 2007; Wilknson in Johnston, 2002)
- scenarios improve the quality of decision making by questioning assumptions, developing fresh insight, getting the measure of problems, developing robust strategies effective if circumstances occur, (Johnston, 2002).
- compel people [students as decision-makers] to begin the planning process by considering what could be not what

has been... scenarios provide a fresh perspective, and a new language and framework that can be used to encourage dialogue and strategic thinking on the challenges and opportunities we face. A more important view is that scenarios – specially "what if " ones – is a very effective learning tool for it accelerates learning, (Duncan & Wack, Pierre, 1994; Mason, 2008).

- can - through systematic instruction - improve reasoning skills, the working memory and the dynamic and interactive set of processes used in problem solving since reasoning, (Sternberg, 2004). By this, scenario planning can provide students with opportunities for expanding experiences and student participation via brainstorming and mapping inductive thinking and inquiry. - force them to deal with a conflict for which they are not prepared, since they are encouraged to think "on their feet" in a manner that they will need to survive in an L_2 environment", (Colburn,1998).

- promote reflective processes, or reflective thinking with its three types defined by Mazirow (1991)- a. content reflection what: we think; b. process reflection: how we think; and c. premise reflection: why we think the way we do – is believed to depend on the success of all learning environments that are featured by interactive meaningful educational experiences.

- create new knowledge, Gracenea et al., (2015).

Siegel (2003) takes another direction which seems to be depending on the communicativeness inside the class setting where scenarios are used by students under the guidance of their instructors. Under the title "why scenarios?" , Siegel assigned four main purposes:

1. *Scenarios are based on stories that teach*. Good stories are memorable. Scenarios are good stories that provide a context for learning because they are relevant and engaging to learners.

2. *Scenarios foster learner interaction and collaboration.* Scenarios engage participants to interact with each other.

3. _Scenarios feature facilitation by an expert in the field._
4. Facilitators encourage learners to appreciate multiple perspectives, pose questions that lead to greater knowledge acquisition, foster problem solving, and create a supportive learning environment. Facilitation plays a crucial role in the transfer of knowledge of actual use of the techniques.
5. _Scenarios are instructionally sound._ Instead of merely exposing learners to description of techniques, scenarios use every active instructional strategies, such as modeling, cooperative learning, direct instruction, practice, coaching, and positive reinforcement. (p.2).

If scenarios are there, there must be an issue to be discussed from different perspectives, a problem to be solved (Murdock,1993, Macqarie Bank Future Problem Solving Program , 2007), a conflict to be resolved (Alsup & Bush, ,2003) or at least explored in-depth for identifying the driving forces or the key players and how they affect the conflict under question. And bearing in mind that problems often work like barriers and they are there to provide an opportunity for us to gain new skills, students using scenarios in an educational setting can approach problem solving as a process with four P's defined by Ellis (2003: p. 211): Define the problem, Generate possibilities, Create a plan, and Perform your plan. Furthermore, scenarios are viewed by Seigel (2005) as interactive tools and "may be used in a training session simulating the problem solution space, or the team may find itself tasked with navigating their way through real problems" (p.1). This view can go in concord with Freiberg and Jerome's (2002) in that scenarios can have contributions in service learning in any community, since service learning is described by Feriberg and H. Jerome as "the involvement of learners in real life settings and situations in which they use their learning and experiences to solve real problems and address real needs in the real community as a regular part of their school curriculum" (p. 338).

Scenarios in Mayotte's (2006) belief is an efficient, objective assessment method which is complex and robust

enough to assess knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in our modern life. For this, she designed a computer simulation system that can present learners with challenging driving conditions and evaluate how they respond. Given the different and varied reasons behind developing and using scenarios, the quotation of De Santis (2000) may be the right conclusion: *The scenarios are designed to educate every one*.

Characteristics of good scenarios

Two different views about the characteristics of good scenarios were determined explicitly by El-Issawy (1998) and Wisdom Tools (2007). From a procedural point, El-Issawy (1998) sees that good scenarios should:

- be different and diverse whatever the number is.
- show internal consistency.
- be clear and comprehensible.
- have the possibility to occur and be featured by plausibility.
- reveal the intersections and change points in the paths defined.
- be of practical profit by making decisions and planning for better future.

On the other hand, Wisdom Tools (2007) views that specific aspects e.g. main focus, accessibility, collaboration etc. should be there to feature scenarios as good. So when scenarios are story-based, they use the inherent power of story-telling to deliver real learning in a contextually-rich format. Besides, they should be distributed, i.e., they can be accessed anywhere, at any time. When scenarios create active sharing of ideas, they are said to be collaborative. At the same time, good scenarios are facilitated, i.e., can be guided by a facilitator who raises probing issues, responds to questions, and oversees learners, progress through the scenario. And finally, good scenarios are integrated. They feature embedded work tools and other resources to overcome the disconnect between work and learning. Besides, no scenario has the same ending. More than that, Snoek's (2001) belief about good scenarios is that they challenge the maps that

people use in setting their courses and routes, and force people to ask themselves difficult and often painful questions about how the future might be different about the recent past.

Scenarios can be judged good when certain features are there like the ones already mentioned. But to the researchers' belief, they are also estimated good in the teaching learning contexts when …

a. they suit the intended learning outcomes set beforehand.
b. they provide students with opportunities to stick deep into the real world problems.
c. they help students be engaged in classroom interactions, and therefore build new relations.
d. they provide students with challenging, authentic tasks and activities.
e. help students make full use of the knowledge available, well manage it, and generate new one.
f. assist students create their "alternative future worlds", i.e., plausible future solutions for the current problematic situations.
g. discriminate between the two types of information: the objective information and the subjective information.
h. train students how to function the language skills for making a decision and solving a problem.

Creating scenarios

Although there is no standard approach to the development of scenarios as Johnston (2002) asserts "unfettered imagination and creativity together with a willing projection into the future are the keys" (p.64), and there is no one correct way of preparing scenarios in Wright and Goodwin's belief in Johnston (op.cit.), *What-if* questions or what is called *contingency scenarios* that offer one solution to one problem can be used initially, followed by defining parameters or scenario logics which are limited to only two sets of drivers that seem to be having a potentially very high impact and a degree of uncertainty. In both ways, reflection takes place in defining the problem, comparing and synthesizing

experiences and generalizing an intuitive solution, then allowing the mind to make an evaluation or judgment.

Yet there is an apparent enigma regarding the steps and stages of developing scenarios. Some researchers (e.g. Hilton & Viebahn, 2005; Erickson, 1996; Snoek, 2003; Stomp and Klein, 2007; Wilknson, 2008; Wulf et al., 2010) accept the five steps initiated by Snoek (2001) to develop scenarios:

1. Deciding the key question for the scenarios.
2. Identifying the fields of change.
3. Selecting the most important fields of change.
4. Identifying the scenarios to be developed.
5. Describing the scenarios and bringing them to life.

The approach described here views the process ending at constructing scenarios rather than further analysis and assessment or even defining time frame for activating/processing scenarios. In trying to find detailed and broader steps to develop scenarios, Mason (2008) suggests four steps that seem to the researcher do not respond to all aspects facets, issues…etc. surrounding the scenario context. Some researchers of future studies (e.g. El-Issawy, Hilton & Viebahn, 2005; 1998; Holroyd et al., 2008, Ringland, 1998) and some methodologists and educationists (e.g. Colburn, 1998; Wisdom Tools, 2007, Peter & Hilton, (2006). Proposed and implemented the steps and the stages of developing scenarios respectively.

For the Egypt project 2020, El-Issawy (1998) displayed detailed steps of constructing scenarios.

1. Describing the status quo and the common trends.
2. Understanding the dynamics of the structure and its driving forces, areas of influence, etc.
3. Determining alternative scenarios.
4. Filtering the alternative scenarios and selecting a definite number of scenarios.
5. Writing/analyzing the scenarios selected.
6. Analyzing the scenario results.

There are nine steps suggested by Holroyd et al. (2008) to create scenarios: focus of the study, timeframe, number of scenarios, driving forces and critical uncertainties, driving forces analysis, scenario development, scenario assessment, scenario impact, scenario management response (or mitigation). In the educational context, Colburn (1998) adopted the view of scenario-based learning or what is termed by Robert Di Pietro *Strategic Interaction* and defined three stages of strategic interaction exercises as thus:

First: Planning stage. During the stage, the instructor or moderator splits the class into two or more groups. Each of these groups is given a different role to play within a given scenario.

Second: Performance stage: In this stage, students must attempt to maintain communication in the target language while trying to make their case and/or resolve the conflict that has arisen. The goal of the exercises is for the students to work creatively in the target language to resolve the conflict successfully.

Third: Debriefing stage At this stage, the instructor or moderator regroups the class, and discusses the events of the performance stage. It may be an opportunity for the students to discuss the discourse, cultural or grammar problems that appeared and/or for the teacher to provide feedback on how to improve communication and/or performance at key points in the scenario.

In 2002, the Wisdom tools presented four stages for developing a scenario:

Stage 1: Pre-Retreat

- Establishing learning objectives

Stage 2: During the retreat activities

- Issues are identified and debated through a series of activities.
- Plotlines unfold.

Stage 3: Post retreat

- Writing the story/mapping out an actual scenario perfecting story lines and characters, creating scenes and settings, and identifying the embedded activities that will give depth to the scenario and addressing learning objectives.

Stage 4: Implementation

- Planning Implementation strategy defining the variables: audience, content, timeframe, outcomes, climate, stakeholders.
- Setting up the installation
- Setting up a prototype for review and critique.
- Ensuring that learners will have a positive experience.

In the teaching of EFL, scenario steps and stages can be adapted, modified or even adopted according to the leaning situation but at the same time they need to be placed within the broader context of communication, oral and written. Although attention of the current research is to writing creatively, it is necessary not to neglect the oral interaction within the teaching learning context.

Scenarios in EFL contexts

- Scenarios and language teaching:Within the communicative language teaching (CLT) framework, some current concerns are labeled by their founders and seen by some experts (e.g., Brown, 2001; Iozzi, 1980; Murdock, 1993; Shewach, 1991; Van der Heijden, 1996) as the latest fads in language teaching. Nearly most of them are thought to be strongly related to scenario planning: Learner–centered Instruction that includes "techniques that give some control to the students (group work or strategy training, for example)… techniques that allow for student creativity and innovation and techniques that enhance a student's sense of competence and self-work" (pp. 46-47), cooperative learning in that "when students

work together in pairs and groups, they share information and come to each other's aid. They are a "team" whose players must work together in order to achieve goals successfully" (p. 47), interactive learning in that interactive classes will most likely be found "receiving authentic language input in real-world contexts" and "producing language for genuine meaningful communication" (p.48). Such CLT practices can discern the elements of learning theory. The first element is described as the *communication principle*: Activities that involve real communications promote learning. The second element is *the task principle*: Activities in which language in used for carrying meaningful tasks promote learning. The third element is the meaning fullness principle: Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process. Furthermore, constructivists hold the belief that a meaningful context that brings the real world into the classroom learning environment is key to promoting learning, (Brown, Collins and Duguid in Carlson (2002)).

- <u>Scenarios and authentic learning:</u> Those who have developed and studied story-centered learning environments (e.g. Ferguson et al., 1992; Schank et al., 1993) propose that the best way to promote learning is to provide a context in which students are engaged in a task for which a story provides useful advice or modeling that can help them achieve their goals. More specifically, such can be fostered through authentic and meaningful tasks, group work in which students can share their understanding, and sufficient time for learners to master use of the learning environment. In so doing, "active cognitive processes such as creating, problem solving, reasoning, decision-making and evaluation" entailed in engaged learning and referred to by Kearsley and Shneiderman in Paulus et al., (2006: 356) can be developed. In his 2008, Errington reflects that situation in a global way: Learning scenarios are based on authentic

and realistic situations that students are likely to meet in real life.

As noted by Carlson (2002a), "authentic learning is an approach to learning that is solidly grounded in research on learning and cognition. One widely held learning theory, construction postulates that students learn best by engaging in authentic learning tasks" (p.2). This implies that authentic learning allows students to explore, discover, and meaningfully construct concepts and relationship in contexts that involve real-world problems and projects that are relevant and interesting to the learner. The argument behind this is that both scenarios and authentic learning share some common grounds and key characteristics:

- Learning is centered on authentic tasks that are of interest to the learners.
- Students are engaged in exploration and inquiry.
- Learning is closely connected to the world beyond the walls of the classroom.
- Students become engaged in complex tasks and higher order thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, designing, manipulating and evaluating information.
- Students produce a product that can be shared with an audience outside the classroom.

For Cautreels (2003), scenarios give the experience of a learning community where full student participation in Meridian's (2003) belief is encouraged, and creativity and discovery are allowed in and outside the classroom. Supporting this point, Mims (2003) suggested an instructional project that exemplifies all the characteristics of an authentic activity. Scenarios as a hypothetical activity was used in that fictional authentic learning project in which the teacher had been approached by Zoo Atlanta requesting the students' assistance in a local advertising campaign.

In illustrating the relationship between scenarios and authentic learning, Mariappan et al. (2004) hold the view that

scenarios as an approach to learning offer an effective way of engaging learners and building mastery, and provide an excellent framework for active learning. That approach is called scenario-based learning (SBL) which is a form of experiential learning:

[Because] it is based on the understanding that in order for a learner to acquire and retain skills and knowledge, the learner must be placed in a scenario where his/her decision affect, or alter subsequent events leading to new events, just in real life. In real life, we are presented with choices every day; some good, some good, some bad, some ok and some irrelevant. Choices we make, improve, deteriorate our current situation, or make no difference. (p.2)

When students learn to solve problems via scenario planning and get able to transfer that learning into additional situations, they so keep up with the tenets of constructivism referred to by Mariappan et al. (2004: p.1) stating: "we believe learning can be engaging, meaningful, and persistent if the joy of discovery and learning context are incorporated into the instructional method. While covering material is important, we feel *uncovering* or constructing, a concept or skills is far more important. In this way, we intend to create active learning environments in which learning is both engaging and meaningful." (pp.1-2). That is, students in a scenario do not blindly follow a set of rules, or learn by rote, but they are introduced to a realistic situation where a sequence of events is presented and possible choices allow them to reach an outcome. Such real learning best occurs when students can immerse themselves or be immersed in a situation in which they are forced to perform, get feedback from surrounders and given chances to correct or adjust their responses. Consequently, they can get best learning experience whose knowledge can be easily retained afterwards. In a study done by National Training Laboratory cited in Mariappan et al. (op. cit). Knowledge retention due to "learning by doing" has been found to be superior when such a method scenario-based learning –is used compared to more common methods of instruction, such as

lecturing, including use of audio/video, demonstration, or even discussion groups.

Such a view is strongly seconded by Brown (2001: p.57) in that "meaningful learning will lead toward better long-term retention than rote learning."

- <u>Scenarios and knowledge management</u>. To Benammar et al. (2006) & Friehs (2004), the use of scenario method in education is based on a socio-constructivist approach to learning with an emphasis on knowledge construction rather than knowledge transmission. The role of the facilitator is to participate with students in constructing reality by engaging them in open-ended inquiry that elicits and challenges students' conceptions about their field of study. A learning group will undergo and shape the learning process communally. Students find out what the present situation is, how past developments led to this point, and what extrapolations and experts say about the future. They learn to consult formal research using statistical extrapolations and informal research such as media scans. They learn to weigh the opinions of experts and the dissenting voices countering prevailing trends. The research is motivated by the shared aim of making scenarios plausible and encouraged by the interactive structure of the scenario method.

In scenarios, students are seen to be engaged in one (or even all) of these processes: knowledge building, knowledge sharing, knowledge creation and knowledge management. Since knowledge management helps its owners "to be able to efficiently solve problems, to share knowledge within a group of people or simply to verify or prove the significance or truth of some kind of information" – according to Asserhofer (2003: p.3) – knowledge management is human-oriented rather than technological oriented because "in some sense, knowledge management supports the unconscious, i.e. passive learning experience" (op. cit. p.4). Therefore, when the required functionality of scenarios is determined, knowledge management

can be identified through its six building blocks stated by Asserhofer: knowledge identification, knowledge preservation, knowledge use, knowledge transfer, knowledge development, knowledge acquisition.

When discussing knowledge management in educational settings, Friehs (2004) views that "knowledge is the entirety of abilities that people use for solving problems. It comprises theoretical knowledge as well as general wisdom, attitude, etc….. Knowledge is a fluctuating mixture of structured experience, values, context information and expert knowledge that all together offer a structural framework for the judgment and integration of new experiences and information." (p.2). In the same vein, Mikulecka and Mikulecky (2000) consider that knowledge management applies systematic approaches to find, understand and use knowledge to create value. It is also the formalizations of and access to experience, knowledge and expertise that create new capabilities, enable superior performance, encourage innovation, and enhance customer value. In sum, by managing knowledge, scenarios can provide a better foundation for making decisions or choosing strategic options and means of implementing its chosen options, improve collective and individual competencies, make students learn more efficiently and effectively and finally improve communication and synergy between all members of the group knowledge workers. Hence, the emphasis of scenarios is on practice rather than process because it relies on how tasks in scenarios are done in order to solve problems, to prepare for the unpredictables and to identify web-like relationships.

- Practical use of scenarios in education: There are some studies tackling scenarios for education (e.g. Benammar et al., 2006; Boy in Muller, 2000; Muller, 2000). Benammar et al. (2006) suggest eight steps in three phases for developing a scenario.

Phase I: Analysis of the environment
1. Step 1: Investigate (expert) visions of the future.

2. Step 2: Investigate trends
3. Step 3: Participate in a strategic conversation and choose driving forces
4. Phase II: Development of the scenarios
5. Step 4: Form a scenario template.
6. Step 5 : Develop the scenario
7. Step 6: Present the scenario
8. Phase III: Reflection on the scenarios
9. Step 7: Determine a position
10. Step 8: Formulate policy recommendations

Benammar et al. (op.cit.) argue that doing the scenario method with students involves some general educational goals: thinking together and reflecting upon one's knowledge, recognizing their own involvement and vision for their field, discussing meaningfully about future challenges and driving forces, and simply exploring 'what they do not know' and thinking outside the box.

Boy in Muller (2000) designed the group Elicitation Method which can be adapted for scenario-based work for it helps participants list ideas, list concepts (refine and combine ideas), explore the importance ranking of ideas and then offer critical analysis of importance ranking. The process model of that method goes as thus: (1) Issue statement and formulation; (2) viewpoints generation (round-robin brain storming, or "brainwriting"; (3) Reformulation into more elaborated concepts; (4) Generation of relationships among the concepts; 5. A "consensus" is calculated from the relative importance pair ratings; (6) Critical analysis of the results.

Muller (2000) reported a three-part Future Workshop conducted for problem identification and clarification, and explained the process model as follows:

- *Critique Phase:* where participants work with a subset of the problem statements to develop a concise critique of a subset of issues in the current work situation.

- *Fantasy Phase:* where participants envision a future work situation that is better than the present and select the most desirable future attributes.
- *Implementation Phase:* where participants present reports on their envisioned future. If not, what changes need to be made? How can those changes be planned?

Critical speaking skills

The role of communicative skills including critical speaking has been radically changed worldwide. Therefore, how to suit one's various communicative situations to one's needs becomes necessary, specifically with new people and/or when building new personal relationships.

For the significance of critical speaking skills required for English language learners, the Communication Within the Curriculum (CWiC) program in the University of Pennsylvania (2008) initiated a   public speaking program with critical speaking seminars in which undergraduates are trained to help their colleagues who need to prepare presentations assigned to them by their professors. Those undergraduates' teaching skills could get improved; a line of thought among them might have evolved and a communicative situation fruitful of public speakers could exist . Besides, class discussions, debates, storytelling, and other types of presentations could improve critical speaking and listening skills. Among them are analyzing speaker's arguments, giving coherent, lucid and polished oral presentations and developing, and debating positions.

In 2008Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction - as cited in Al-Hadi (2015) - provided a portfolio named Wisconsin Cooperative Education Skill Certification for Youth Leadership, including many skills to be developed. Among them are some critical speaking skills: discussing an issue with a supervisor, teacher, or colleague, elaborating on others' ideas, giving constructive oral feedback to others, using different formats orally to convey ideas, opinions, or feelings and engaging in an open exchange or ideas with others.

Also, some researchers (e.g. Hilton, 2013; Marshal, 2012; Stevens, 2013) believe think that critical speaking is the essence of public speaking. When public speakers master critical skills and practice them during delivering their speeches, they can not only enrich their own personal and professional life, but influence others' as well. In 2012, Marshal provided 17 tips to public speakers in order to help them present effective speeches. For example, when the public speaker knows his audience, he can decide how he can understand and meet their needs. Besides, the public speaker has to identify the efforts exerted before, and which of them worked and which ones did not. In 2013, key points about public speaking were presented by Hilton. He believed that public speaking can help the participants to strengthen their self-esteem, be involved in new social and professional communications , and disseminating the ideas that might lead to (un)favorable conditions. Furthermore, Stevens (2013) – as cited in Al-Hadi (2015) – appear to agree with Marshal. She thinks that mastering skills can enhance critical communication skills. Some of those skills – according to Stevens (2013) - are: listen carefully, communicate clearly and assertively, give positive feedback, manage effectively, educate without arrogance, build rapport, know your audience, be congruent in tone, nonverbal communication skills and words, select your words carefully, and remove distracting barriers.

In 2006, a comprehensive two-day seminar was launched by Fredrick Knapp Association, Inc. to develop and sharpen management speaking skills called "Excu-Speak". This seminar is featured by some characteristics that seem to be its real objectives. Although the seminar is designed for the business person who needs to give credible, convincing and dynamic presentations, it can also be suitable for EFL university students who need such critical speaking skills in a public speaking context. They state:

- You learn how to project the strength and enthusiasm in your speaking voice.
- You will learn word power and to choose phrases and words that will stimulate and persuade your audience.

- You will learn proved ways to overcome apprehension so you can   project self-confidence and professional poise. (p.2)

In his article Thinking Critically, Speaking Critically , Klauda (2004) refers to the content of the issues raised/discussed in public speaking. He claims that it is extremely difficult for people to criticize their own social environments. This is because if you try to criticize your own social environments, you are essentially criticizing yourself for whom you are, your identity, your aspirations to be with a particular group, the need you have for moral and other support from others. Klauda goes backward and suggested a solution. He holds the belief that, " stimulation of people to review their political and social environments so that they will take action to remedy them and improve their own personal positions in terms of power and equality"(p.4). Critical speaking, in such a situation, is the departure point towards accomplishing such a function.

The latest attempts – as Al-Hadi (2015) claims - to inject critical speaking skills in TEFL/TESL teaching/learning situation are currently being done by ICAL TEFL Center affiliated to Chungdahm Phils Inc. (2014) and the English Language Center in Shantou University, China. The first center is running forums and discussions on TEFL/TESL and looking for a critical speaking tutor working for Chungdahm Critical Speaking Learning Program. On the other hand, the English Language Center of Shantou University is presenting a course entitled "Critical speaking and creative writing". That course is designed for advanced learners of English to improve their oral and writing skills. It provides opportunities to engage learners in expressing ideas, exchanging thoughts, composing essays, debating on issues and also developing their interest and abilities in creative thinking and critical thinking through task-based instruction.

In 2014, Ismail conducted a study aiming at investigating the effectiveness of a web-based program for developing EFL students' listening comprehension and critical speaking skills. The study adopted the quasi-experimental design of a one pre-

posttest group. The participants of the study were 20 third year English majors at Suez Faculty of Education. The instruments included a pre-post listening comprehension test and a pre-post critical speaking skills test. The participants were all exposed to web-based intervention to enhance their listening comprehension and critical speaking skills. The results revealed a statistically significant difference in the one pre-posttest group mean scores on the pre and posttest of listening comprehension, in favor of the posttest. Also, a statistically significant difference was found in the one pre-posttest group mean scores on the pre and posttest of critical speaking skills, I favor of the posttest. The Web-Based Program (WBP) was effective in developing EFL students' listening and critical speaking skills.

Taking a new perspective, Al-Hadi (2015), administered a study attempting to explore the effect of what he calls "National Conversation Forums (NCFs)" to enhance EFL university students' critical speaking skills. According to him, social issues-based forums were seen the best context to divergent perspectives, conflicting views and diverse positions in reasoned discourse. The sample of his study were 9 EFL university students. And his study instruments were a public speaking and critical discourse analysis. The study results showed the NCFs had a positive effect on developing critical speaking skills

Integrating Scenarios and critical speaking

From the literature and the related studies that have been reviewed, one can find some currents that run through scenarios and critical speaking skills. The first current highlights the scenario building skills: (1) defining the physical properties set of the place or the situation where a problematic issue or unfavorable conditions exist, (2) defining the predetermined, existing state of affairs of the problematic place or situation under investigation, (3) identifying the key players and driving forces, (4) deciding the uncertainties and their polar ends, (5) arranging orderly the uncertainties determined, (6) selecting the alternative futures for resolving the issue, (7) developing different plausible, consistent, challenging scenarios, (8) testing

the scenarios developed for seizing the opportunities discovered and minimizing the threats identified, (9) strategizing the scenarios of prime priorities. Another current stresses the critical speaking skills identified by Al-Hadi (2015): (1) mastering the subject matter with rich data and credible analyses and interpretations, (2) delivering well-organized oral presentation, (3) finding some common ground with listeners, (4) using different types of reasoning to convince the audience, (5) examining counterarguments related to the issue in focus and refuting them logically, (6) comparing and contrasting personal conflicting views presented on different occasions, (7) posing hypothetical questions and queries related to the issue in focus and answering them, (8) adjusting to different styles of interaction , (9) providing alternative, creative, and feasible solutions to some existing and other predictable problems. A third current focuses upon the situations that integrate scenarios and critical speaking skills. Each situation tackles one issue or a specific problem whose solution is based on analyzing and interpreting issues, bringing/offering perspectives, identifying alternatives and examining solutions. Below are some situations that might give an idea about how to administer scenarios in EFL contexts in order develop critical speaking skills.

Situation One:

An unemployed Saudi university degree holder once said: All foreigners – who nearly constitute six millions - working in Saudi Arabia must be sent away to save their jobs for the unemployed Saudis.

- Subject Area: Call for Saudisation
- Scenario Description: Resolving the issue of unemployment in Saudi Arabia
- Estimated Time: 30 minutes
- Features: The situation was designed to investigate the participants' skill in decision making and problem solving. It places this skill within a real world context. It is a challenging situation to present a view that the

participants have to weigh up when making a decision and suggest in a course of action from tenable options. It focuses on how to save jobs for the Saudi nationals in favorable conditions leading to some sort of agreed upon social change, at the time specific jobs should be filled in by highly qualified non- Saudis.

Situation Two:

During one of the *Talk Shows Programs* on the Sudanese TV, an educational expert appealed for abolishing free education in the Sudan, seeking an educational level of high quality. The rich families seem to approve that appeal.

- Subject Area: Education in the Sudan
- Scenario Description: Abolishing free education in the Sudan
- Estimated Time: 30 minutes
- Features: A simple diagnostic situation designed to show what is typically happening in the Sudanese schools at all levels. The participants are to break the scenario into two parts at least: a for–centered part and an against-centered part from all parties concerned, students, parents, teachers, educational experts, psychologists, social workers, legislators, as well as decision makers and takers. Then they are required to provide a resolution based on some predetermined factors as well as examining the predictabilities at the end of the scenario.

Situation Three:

The world's wealth is unevenly distributed. Some countries as the USA, West Germany and Japan are very rich, while others like Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Yemen are very poor. The rich nations give aid to the developing countries. But is it enough?

- Subject Area: World Economy
- Scenario Description: World Aid to Developing Countries
- Estimated Time: 30 minutes
- Features: This situation uses a series of small multi-faceted choices to break the scenario up, and offer

opportunities for student reflection. It is issues-based where conflicting views and opinions must be sifted through and assessed. The scenario allows students to provide alternatives that are practical and plausible.

Implications for Applied Linguistics

As it is already known that the linguists tend to apply the linguistic perspectives in an academic field, the command of functioning theories seems necessary in order to make sure whether they are applicable or not. Therefore, the researcher sees that in order for integrating scenarios and critical speaking, there should be an academic course using a specific teaching strategy. In this context, the strategy might be called a scenario-based strategy (SBS). And there must be *logical bases* for such a strategy. Some of them might be:

a. Educational contexts can probe various critical views for one individual issue.
b. University EFL students tend to find scenarios enjoyable and stimulating, in case they have common concerns with different predictabilities,
c. Multi-faceted issues that constitute scenarios can stimulate critical reflective thinking that might result in critical speaking.
d. Face-to-face conversations thinking in how to build scenarios, and examining the most feasible one for problem solving yield rich atmosphere for speaking critically.
e. Practicing that all life situations have opposing views; contradictions are everywhere; turning points are possible; different solutions are predicted and key players do exist in every situation though there are general givens and predetermined matters.

Besides, the SBS *setting* has to be calm, and relaxing . The participants are suggested to be grouped into odd-number small groups, five participants each, for example. From time to time, the moderator on-the-spot situation plays an assigned , well prepared role. The rationale is that small groups tend to generate well-thought

out responses for problem solving, with enough diversity of opinions or perspectives. Besides, the odd number of members facilitates decision making. Moreover, the small size group provides continued practice in group process, and every student has an opportunity to express ideas.

The SBS is suggested to have ten sessions of two hours each: one introductory session, eight instructional sessions, and one concluding session. The <u>introductory session</u> revolves around introducing the SBS to the participants with some ethics, rules and instructions to be followed. Mutual respect of the personal opinions and perspectives should be there, but should not stand alone. Competitiveness should work; collaboration should exist; strategic thinking should be triggered; and critical speaking should dominate the SBS setting atmosphere.

The focus of the <u>instructional sessions</u> will be on: (1) a theoretical background on scenarios : definition, approaches, elements, and types, then the characteristics of good scenarios presenting sample examples of each, (2) how to analyze scenarios in the realm of some criteria set for that purpose, and (3) how to design scenarios. During each session, the participants – in each group - have to perform a thematic function as well as a linguistic one. *Thematically*, they have to determine : (1) whether (and to what degree) a problem is existing, (2) whether (and to what degree) a specific action is appropriate in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated, (3) whether (and to what degree) a similar action is in fact done, actually performed whether the predetermined aspects (and to what degree) are there, (4) whether the status quo (and to what degree) needs change, (5) whether (and to what degree) alternatives are existing for solving predictable problems, (6) a specific solution is creative, and feasible in virtue of the means of implementation available. And *linguistically*, the participants have to (1) use plain language for analyzing and interpreting the data provided, (2) use different types of reasoning to convince the audience, (3) examine counterarguments related to the issue/problem in focus and refute them logically, (4) compare and contrast personal conflicting views presented on different occasions, and (5) deliver oral presentation that is lucid, and well-organized.

The <u>concluding session</u> stresses sharing ideas as for the issues raised and the problems presented, the scenarios analyzed and designed, and how the language is critically used to create unthinkable solutions. Besides, other concerns that require further discussion or have not yet been addressed should also be considered.

Conclusions

This study has proved the existence of a close relationship between scenarios and critical speaking, and there are a reasoned perspective that EFL contexts can make use of the integration between scenarios as a teaching strategy and critical speaking skills that are required in intricate issues and /or problematic situations. In fact, explicit instruction and training with hands-on activities, and ongoing assessment has a positive impact on the quality of scenario awareness and then on developing skills. It is conceivable that providing students with theoretical background about scenarios - definition, use, how to construct, ... might have boost the students' attention and effort to resolve challenges in such a way that help them develop higher level cognitive skills, use deeper levels of processing and get actively involved in tasks and activities required. The current study, while providing an applicable perspective for effective instructional approach, is probably sustainable in EFL contexts for more than one reason. First, it will not lose its ability to attract EFL instructors in teaching language skills. Second, it does not require specific types of learners or classrooms nor certain text structures.

Although the current study has emphasized the relationship between scenarios and critical speaking skills, the strategy proposed in the study seems to succeed in developing different language skills, motivating students to achieve better and getting involved in classroom participations. Moreover, the class size, or the educational level do not seem to be obstacles to implement such a strategy in EFL contexts.

Recommendations

In light of the conclusions reached, the following recommendations seem pertinent:

1. It is recommended that a scenario-based program become a component of the prescribed curriculum of speaking and writing classes at the university level.
2. EFL teachers need to be trained on how to introduce and model scenarios for students in order for this type of learning approach to be successful.
3. Since the ultimate aim of teaching is to help develop independent learners, scenario-based learning appears to provide a tool for improvement of meta-cognitive skills.
4. Scenario-based activities should be task-oriented, topic-oriented and engaging. When students are given specific directions to fulfill a specific and understandable purpose by working on a task to resolve a problem or to take a decision, they are more actively involved. Active involvement is important for effective teaching and learning.

Suggestions for Further Research

1. More research is needed to explore how far scenario-based instruction affects: a. writing skills, b. questioning skills, c. taking notes skills, d. summarizing skill, e. communication skills, f. integrating language skills.
2. Conducting studies to use scenarios for improving reflective learning, critical thinking, accelerating learning and knowledge retention seems necessary.
3. Situation Analysis in speaking classes seems important to explore what types of and how far scenarios are used by teachers as well as by students, when using scenarios as an instructional strategy.

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