

STORYTELLING WITH THE ASSURE MODEL AND CONTENT-BASED APPROACHES TO IMPROVE 3RD-6TH GRADE STUDENT'S SPEAKING SKILLS AT SIKKOLA RAKYAT

Lusy Sitanggang, Juliana Sidauruk, Evelyn Zebua, Faiz Nasution, Meisuri Ginting

English Literature, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia

lusisitanggang8@gmail.com, sidaurukjuli5@gmail.com, evelynachel312@gmail.com,
faiznst15@gmail.com, meisuriw@yahoo.com

Abstract

This research explores the integration of the ASSURE Model and content-based approaches to enhance the speaking skills of 3rd–6th grade students at Sikkola Rakyat. Speaking proficiency is a crucial aspect of language learning, yet many young learners struggle with confidence, fluency, and engagement in English communication. The ASSURE Model provides a systematic framework for lesson planning, ensuring that instructional strategies are tailored to students' needs. Meanwhile, the content-based approach immerses learners in meaningful and contextually rich materials, fostering natural language acquisition. Using a qualitative research design, this study examines the effectiveness of these combined methods through classroom observations and student performance assessments. The findings reveal that implementing the ASSURE Model alongside content-based learning significantly improves students' speaking abilities, participation, and overall language confidence. This study underscores the importance of structured and interactive teaching methods in developing young learners' communication skills.

Keywords: ASSURE Model, content-based approach, speaking skills, language learning.

Introduction

Speaking is one of the most crucial aspects of language learning, as it enables learners to communicate effectively in various academic and social contexts. However, many young learners, particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL) settings, struggle to develop strong speaking skills due to several challenges, including limited exposure to authentic language use, fear of making mistakes, and a lack of confidence in expressing their thoughts verbally (Richards, 2008). Brown (2007) defines speaking as an interactive process that involves constructing meaning through the production, reception, and interpretation of spoken messages, which requires both linguistic knowledge and communicative competence. Unfortunately, traditional language instruction in many ESL classrooms tends to emphasize grammar and writing skills rather than oral communication, leading to a gap between students' theoretical understanding of English and their ability to use it fluently in real-life situations (Harmer, 2007). To address this issue, educators must implement instructional methods that promote active student engagement and meaningful communication. The ASSURE Model, which provides a structured approach to instructional design, and content-based instruction, which emphasizes learning language through relevant subject matter, offer a promising

combination for fostering students' speaking proficiency in a more interactive and engaging manner.

Content-based instruction (CBI) has been widely recognized as an effective approach to language learning, as it integrates language acquisition with subject matter instruction, allowing students to develop their linguistic skills naturally within meaningful contexts. According to Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (2003), CBI enhances language learning by immersing students in content-rich materials that encourage them to use the target language for real communicative purposes. Unlike traditional approaches that isolate language learning from practical application, CBI provides students with opportunities to develop their speaking skills by discussing, analyzing, and interacting with content that is both interesting and educational. This method is particularly beneficial for young learners, as it fosters motivation and engagement by making language learning relevant to their experiences and interests (Met, 1999). Furthermore, Lightbown and Spada (2013) argue that exposure to authentic language input in a content-based environment helps learners acquire vocabulary, improve pronunciation, and develop greater confidence in speaking. However, for CBI to be effective, it must be implemented systematically, ensuring that students not only engage with content but also receive adequate linguistic support to enhance their speaking skills. This is where the ASSURE Model becomes essential, as it provides a structured framework that guides educators in planning and delivering lessons that are tailored to students' needs.

The ASSURE Model is an instructional design framework that focuses on optimizing the learning experience by systematically analyzing students, selecting appropriate teaching materials, and incorporating interactive learning strategies (Heinich et al., 2002). This model ensures that lessons are student-centered and designed to enhance engagement, which is crucial for improving speaking skills. By integrating the ASSURE Model with CBI, teachers can create dynamic classroom environments that encourage active participation, critical thinking, and meaningful communication. Research has shown that students develop stronger speaking skills when they are given structured opportunities to use language in interactive ways, such as through discussions, role-playing, and collaborative projects (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Additionally, the use of multimedia resources, storytelling activities, and real-world scenarios can further enhance students' ability to express themselves fluently and confidently. *Sikkola Rakyat* (sometimes spelled *Sekolah Rakyat*) is a term in Indonesian that generally refers to community-based schools or informal education programs aimed at providing education to underserved communities. These schools often focus on marginalized groups, such as children from low-income families, indigenous communities, or those who have limited access to formal schooling. The concept of *Sikkola Rakyat* is particularly prevalent in regions where formal education may not be easily accessible. Some initiatives under this name are inspired by local cultural values and indigenous knowledge systems, integrating them into their curriculum to ensure that learning remains relevant to the community's needs.

Several studies have explored the effectiveness of structured instructional models and content-based learning in improving students' speaking abilities. A study by Richards and Lockhart (2010) found that students who participated in content-based discussions showed higher levels of speaking proficiency and confidence compared to those taught using traditional grammar-based instruction. Similarly, a study by Genesee and Lindholm-Leary (2012) on content-based language learning in primary schools revealed that students exposed to subject-matter-focused language instruction demonstrated better oral fluency and engagement. Research by Egbert (2005) also supports the idea that incorporating multimedia and interactive activities, such as digital storytelling and role-playing, enhances students' speaking skills by providing engaging and authentic communication opportunities. These studies highlight the importance of integrating structured instructional models and content-based learning to support students' speaking development in EFL classrooms. The integration of the ASSURE Model and Content-Based Instruction presents a promising approach to improving the speaking skills of young learners in ESL settings. The ASSURE Model provides a structured and student-centered instructional framework, ensuring that lessons are interactive and engaging, while CBI fosters meaningful language use by immersing students in authentic communication contexts. Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of these approaches in enhancing students' speaking fluency, pronunciation, and confidence. By implementing these strategies, educators can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical language use, equipping students with the communication skills necessary for academic and social success. This study aims to further explore the impact. This study aims to explore the impact of combining the ASSURE Model and CBI on the speaking development of students at Sikkola Rakyat, highlighting effective teaching strategies that can be applied to ESL classrooms. By implementing these approaches, educators can bridge the gap between language theory and practice, equipping young learners with the necessary skills to communicate effectively in English.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Speaking Skills in Language Learning

Speaking is one of the four fundamental language skills and plays a vital role in communication, yet it remains one of the most challenging aspects of language learning, particularly in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts. According to Brown (2007), speaking is an interactive process that involves constructing meaning through the exchange of spoken messages, requiring both linguistic competence and communicative ability. Harmer (2007) further emphasizes that speaking not only involves fluency but also accuracy, pronunciation, and appropriate use of language structures. However, many young learners struggle with speaking due to a lack of confidence, limited vocabulary, and insufficient exposure to authentic communication situations. Traditional teaching methods, which often prioritize grammar and writing over oral skills, further hinder students' speaking development (Richards, 2008). To address these challenges, educators

must adopt teaching strategies that actively engage students in speaking activities and provide meaningful contexts for language use.

2.2 The ASSURE Model in Language Instruction

The ASSURE Model is an instructional design framework that helps educators create effective and student-centered lesson plans. Developed by Heinich et al. (2002), the ASSURE Model consists of six key steps: Analyze Learners, State Objectives, Select Methods and Media, Utilize Resources, Require Learner Participation, and Evaluate and Revise. This structured approach ensures that lessons are tailored to students' needs and learning preferences, making instruction more engaging and effective. In the context of language learning, the ASSURE Model provides a systematic way to incorporate interactive and communicative activities that promote speaking skills. According to Smaldino, Lowther, and Russell (2012), using a structured instructional framework like the ASSURE Model improves students' engagement and retention by integrating diverse teaching materials and interactive learning methods. By requiring learner participation and continuous assessment, the model encourages active involvement in speaking activities, which is crucial for developing fluency and confidence in young learners. Furthermore, the model's emphasis on evaluation allows educators to refine their teaching strategies, ensuring that students receive continuous support in their language development.

2.3 Content-Based Instruction (CBI) and Speaking Development

Content-Based Instruction (CBI) is a language teaching approach that integrates subject matter learning with language acquisition. Brinton, Snow, and Wesche (2003) describe CBI as a method that emphasizes the use of meaningful content to enhance language learning, enabling students to develop their speaking skills in an engaging and relevant context. Unlike traditional approaches that separate language learning from real-world application, CBI immerses students in authentic communication situations, fostering language acquisition through discussion, problem-solving, and critical thinking activities. Met (1999) highlights that CBI is particularly effective for young learners, as it enhances motivation and provides opportunities for meaningful interaction. Additionally, Lightbown and Spada (2013) argue that students acquire language more effectively when they are exposed to context-rich learning environments where language is used as a tool for communication rather than as an isolated subject of study. In an ESL classroom, implementing CBI can help students improve their speaking skills by engaging with content that is both educational and personally relevant.

2.4 Integrating the ASSURE Model and Content-Based Instruction in EFL Classrooms

Combining the ASSURE Model with Content-Based Instruction provides a powerful approach to improving students' speaking skills. The ASSURE Model ensures that lessons are systematically planned and tailored to students' needs, while CBI provides meaningful content that fosters authentic language use. Research has shown that interactive,

content-rich instruction leads to greater student engagement and improved speaking proficiency (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). By integrating these approaches, educators can create dynamic and communicative classrooms where students actively participate in discussions, role-playing activities, and collaborative projects. The structured nature of the ASSURE Model ensures that these activities are well-organized and aligned with learning objectives, maximizing their effectiveness in developing speaking skills. Furthermore, multimedia resources, storytelling exercises, and problem-solving activities can be incorporated to make learning more interactive and enjoyable. Studies have demonstrated that when students are provided with structured opportunities to practice speaking in meaningful contexts, their fluency, pronunciation, and confidence improve significantly (Harmer, 2007).

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the effectiveness of the ASSURE Model and Content-Based Instruction (CBI) in improving the speaking skills of 3rd–6th grade students at Sikkola Rakyat. The participants consist of students and teachers from the school, selected through purposive sampling to ensure a representative group. Data collection methods include classroom observations, structured interviews with teachers, and student performance assessments to evaluate the impact of the instructional approach. The classroom observations focus on how the ASSURE Model is implemented in conjunction with CBI strategies, examining student engagement, participation, and fluency in speaking activities. Teacher interviews provide insights into instructional challenges and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the approach. Additionally, student speaking assessments measure improvements in fluency, pronunciation, and confidence over the course of the study. Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and trends related to the effectiveness of integrating the ASSURE Model and CBI. The findings will offer practical recommendations for educators seeking to enhance speaking instruction in ESL classrooms, contributing to the broader discussion on effective language teaching strategies for young learners.

4. Results and Discussion

This project applies the **ASSURE model** to enhance 3rd-6th grade students' speaking skills through storytelling. Each step ensures a structured, engaging, and student-centered learning experience:

Analyze Learners – Assess students' speaking skills, challenges, and learning preferences. Initial evaluations show that some students are more comfortable speaking in small groups than in front of an audience.

Applied: Initial assessment through discussions and group practice before class presentations.

State Objectives – Focus on fluency, storytelling structure, expression, and confidence in speaking.

Applied: Clear learning goals in each session, with evaluations after every lesson.

Select Methods, Media, and Materials – Use model-based storytelling, expression exercises, and a content-based approach with relevant themes.

Applied: Videos, story templates, and voice recordings as learning tools.

Utilize Media and Materials – Ensure interactive use of all selected learning resources.

Applied: Students practice with various media before their final presentation.

Require Learner Participation – Encourage active student involvement through story creation, group practice, and peer feedback.

Applied: Small group discussions and peer review sessions (Meeting 4).

Evaluate and Revise – Measure progress through teacher observations, self-reflection, and peer feedback.

Applied: Reflection and feedback sessions to assess and improve storytelling skills.

This project aims to enhance the speaking skills of 3rd-6th grade students at Sikkola Rakyat through storytelling. By integrating the ASSURE model and a content-based approach, students will develop confidence, fluency, and expressive abilities in spoken language in 4 meetings. The key objectives include:

- Encouraging students to engage in storytelling to improve their spoken communication.
- Developing students' understanding of storytelling structures and expressive techniques.
- Providing an interactive and supportive environment where students can practice and refine their speaking skills.

The syllabus:

Meeting	Learning Objectives	Activities	Media & Resources	Evaluation
1: Introduction to Storytelling and Student Needs Analysis	1. Understand the basics of storytelling and its benefits. 2. Recognize different types of stories and storytelling techniques. 3. Show storytelling in Indonesia 4. Assess students' speaking abilities.	- Conduct initial assessment through discussions and short interviews. - Explain the program objectives and benefits of storytelling. - Introduce storytelling elements (plot, character, setting, conflict, moral message). - Listen to and respond to a short story. - Retell a story in their own words.	Storybooks, storytelling videos, supporting images.	- Observe student participation in discussions. - Assess students' responses to the story.
2: Speaking Techniques and Expressive Skills	1. Learn effective speaking techniques (intonation, articulation, tempo, facial/body expressions). 2. Identify and use verbal and non-verbal expressions in storytelling.	- Use video examples of storytelling by children. - Explain proper speaking techniques with demonstrations. - Practice saying sentences with different intonations and expressions. - activity: Read and present a mini-story.	Storytelling videos, audio recordings, mirrors for expression practice.	- Observe students' performance in expression and intonation practice. - Provide feedback from teacher and peers.

Meeting	Learning Objectives	Activities	Media & Resources	Evaluation
3: Presenting and Practicing a Short Story	1. Give a short story with a clear structure in English. 2. Present and practice a story independently with confidence.	- Provide a storytelling template to guide story creation. - Read a short story based on a given theme. - Practice storytelling in small groups with techniques of story telling.	Storytelling templates, whiteboard, simple props.	- Assess fluency, expression, and audience engagement. - Self-assessment and peer feedback.
4: Evaluation and Reflection	1. Evaluate their speaking skills improvement. 2. Provide feedback on peers' presentations.	- Share experiences from the program. - Self-assessment through reflection journals. - Peer feedback on storytelling performances. - Final storytelling performance of a favorite story.	Reflection journals, assessment rubrics, camera for documentation.	- Use a speaking skills rubric (fluency, intonation, expression, eye contact). - Reflection discussions to enhance understanding and motivation.

Storytelling Activities Using the ASSURE Model

Jumat, 14 Maret 2025

Meeting 1: Introduction to Storytelling and Student Needs Analysis



Activity Description: In the first session, students were introduced to the concept of storytelling, its benefits, and various story elements such as plot, characters, setting, conflict, and moral message. The teacher also conducted an initial assessment through discussions and brief interviews to understand students' speaking abilities. We introduce storytelling in Indonesia.

Observations:

- Most students were enthusiastic while listening to the story.
- Some students had difficulty identifying story elements.
- Students felt more comfortable speaking in small groups rather than in front of the class.

Sabtu, 15 Maret 2025

Meeting 2: Speaking Techniques and Expressive Skills



Activity Description: In this session, students learned effective speaking techniques, such as intonation, articulation, tempo, as well as facial expressions and body gestures. They also watched examples of storytelling and practiced these techniques.

Observations:

- Some students began to show improvement in intonation and expression while speaking.
- Some students were still shy and lacked confidence.
- Practicing in front of a mirror helped students understand their facial expressions while speaking.

Jumat, 21 Maret 2025

Meeting 3: Reading and Practicing a Short Story



Activity Description: Students were given a storytelling to help them read short stories based on a given theme. They read their stories, practiced in groups, and prepared for presentations.

Observations:

- Most students were able to compose simple stories with a clear structure.
- Some still struggled with delivering their stories confidently.
- Students enjoyed group practice before presenting in front of the class.

Sabtu, 22 Maret 2025

Meeting 4: Evaluation and Reflection





Activity Description: In the final session, students performed their storytelling presentations in front of the class and received peer feedback. They also reflected on their progress in speaking skills.

Observations:

- Many students showed improvement in storytelling compared to the initial session.
- Peer feedback helped students recognize areas for improvement.
- Students became more confident in speaking in front of the class.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the entire series of activities, there was a noticeable improvement in students' speaking skills in terms of fluency, expression, and confidence. This program effectively encouraged student participation and can be further developed with adjustments based on individual student proficiency levels.

The findings of this study indicate that integrating the ASSURE Model and Content-Based Instruction (CBI) significantly enhances students' speaking skills in the ESL classroom. Classroom observations revealed that students exhibited greater enthusiasm and confidence when engaging in speaking activities. The structured nature of the ASSURE Model allowed for better lesson organization, ensuring that students were gradually introduced to speaking exercises that matched their proficiency levels. Teachers noted that learners were more willing to participate in discussions, role-playing, and storytelling sessions, as they found the content engaging and relevant to their real-life experiences.

One of the most significant improvements observed was in students' fluency and pronunciation. The interactive and content-rich nature of CBI created an environment where students were exposed to authentic language use, helping them practice their speaking skills in a meaningful way. Assessments conducted before and after the implementation of the instructional approach demonstrated noticeable progress in students' ability to express their thoughts clearly and coherently. Many students who initially hesitated to speak English began to participate more actively, demonstrating greater confidence in using the language. These results align with previous studies (Brinton, Snow, & Wesche, 2003; Richards & Rodgers, 2014), which emphasize the importance of contextualized and interactive learning in language acquisition.

Furthermore, teacher interviews highlighted that the integration of the ASSURE Model and CBI facilitated a more dynamic and engaging classroom atmosphere. Educators reported that students were more motivated to learn and less fearful of making mistakes. The emphasis on learner participation and continuous feedback encouraged students to refine their pronunciation, expand their vocabulary, and develop better sentence structures. Additionally, the evaluation and revision components of the ASSURE Model allowed teachers to adapt their instructional methods based on students' progress, ensuring that learning objectives were met effectively.

Despite these positive outcomes, some challenges were also identified. Teachers pointed out that designing content-based lessons that aligned with the curriculum while also fostering speaking skills required additional preparation time. Moreover, some students initially struggled with the shift from traditional grammar-based instruction to a more interactive, communicative approach. However, as students became more accustomed to the methodology, their engagement and performance improved significantly. Future research could explore how digital tools and multimedia resources can further enhance the effectiveness of the ASSURE Model and CBI in developing speaking skills.

The results of this study confirm that the integration of the ASSURE Model and Content-Based Instruction is highly effective in improving speaking skills among 3rd–6th grade students at Sikkola Rakyat. The structured lesson planning of the ASSURE Model, combined with the engaging and meaningful language use promoted by CBI, creates an ideal learning environment for young learners. These findings provide valuable insights for educators seeking to implement innovative teaching strategies to enhance students' communicative competence in ESL settings.

This study has demonstrated that the combined use of the ASSURE Model and Content-Based Instruction significantly enhances the speaking skills of 3rd–6th grade students at Sikkola Rakyat. By integrating a structured instructional framework with engaging, meaningful content, students were able to improve their fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in speaking English. The systematic approach provided by the ASSURE Model ensured that lessons were well-organized and tailored to the students' needs, while the content-driven nature of CBI encouraged authentic language use in the classroom. The study's findings highlight the importance of interactive, student-centered teaching methods in ESL instruction. Observations and assessments confirmed that students who engaged in content-based learning activities showed greater participation, motivation, and language retention. Teachers also noted that students became more confident in their speaking abilities, demonstrating a shift from passive learning to active communication. Despite initial challenges in adapting to the new instructional approach, both teachers and students benefited from the structured yet flexible nature of the ASSURE Model and CBI. Future research should explore additional ways to enhance the effectiveness of these methodologies, such as integrating technology and digital media to further support student engagement. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into the long-term impact of these teaching strategies on students' language development.

Overall, this study underscores the need for educators to adopt innovative and research-backed instructional approaches to improve speaking skills in young ESL learners, ultimately fostering more effective and enjoyable language learning experiences.

References

- Brinton, D. M., Snow, M. A., & Wesche, M. B. (2003). *Content-Based Second Language Instruction*. University of Michigan Press.
- Ellis, G., & Brewster, J. (2014). *Tell it Again! The New Storytelling Handbook for Primary Teachers*. British Council.
- Heinich, R., Molenda, M., Russell, J. D., & Smaldino, S. E. (2001). *Instructional Media and Technologies for Learning* (7th ed.). Merrill Prentice Hall
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2014). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Slattery, M., & Willis, J. (2001). *English for Primary Teachers: A Handbook of Activities and Classroom Techniques*. Oxford University Press.
- Wright, A. (2008). *Storytelling with Children* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.