

## **Development of a Blended Instructional Model via Weblog to Enhance English Summary Writing Ability of Thai Undergraduate Students**

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### **Abstract**

The objective of this research and development was to develop an effective blended instructional model via weblog to enhance English summary writing ability of Thai undergraduate students. A sample group in the English program of Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University was studied in academic year 2010-2013. The research instruments were an effective semi-structured interview form, the learning and instructional record format, the test of English summary writing ability, and the English summary writing criterion. The data were analyzed by percentage, means, standard deviation, and the t-test. It was found that the blended instructional model via weblog comprised three stages of blended activities: extracting information via face to face instruction, summarizing via weblog, and publishing on weblog. It was named “S2A Model.” The model was effective in enhancing the university students’ English summary writing ability as the post-test scores of the students met the set criterion of the study.

**Keywords:** Blended instruction; weblog; summary writing; 21<sup>st</sup> century writing.

## Introduction

English is important among Thai university students for at least two reasons. First, it is a means for boosting job opportunities following graduation. Second, it is beneficial for use in further advanced studies, both in Thailand and abroad. Thus, fundamental courses in English are offered at Thai universities that cover a range of different topics.

Although the Thai government has tried to support English instruction at all levels of education, the students have confronted various difficulties in their English studies. Students can read, but cannot write effectively in English, as shown by the English test results of 12,000 foreign graduate students in Australia in 2007 which revealed that 50 percent of Thai students scored low (Charoenwongsak, 2008). This finding was similar to the results of other written test scores for Thai undergraduate students where low scores pointed to weaknesses in (1) paragraph and an essay writing, (2) writing mechanics, and (3) grammatical structure, parts of speech, and sentence structures (Tidthongkam, 2008; Khansamrong, 2004). Similarly, the study of academic writing problems at Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University in 2009-2010 found that most students had confronted some difficulties in locating topic sentences and details, organizing ideas, using grammatical structures and vocabulary, and summary writing (Termsinsuk, 2010).

In accordance with instructional methods and methodology for teaching writing in the 21st century, writing in English is taught through the use of technology, teaching fully online, or in a blended way. Using technology web 2.0, a web for educational medias like wikis and weblogs, makes students become more interested in attending online training among real readers, whereas teaching face-to-face assists students in learning the right rules and principles and in obtaining useful feedback (Newman, 2009; Prinz, 2010; Crane, 2009). Using both of these techniques is called writing through blended instruction.

Blended instruction via weblog has been studied and almost all of the study revealed its positive effects on learning. For the effect in a language classroom, most practitioners in Japan, Turkey and Korea found that after using blended instruction via weblogs, the students' writing abilities were increased (Oh & Park, 2009; Bahce & Taslaci, 2009; Kizil & Arslan, 2010; Miyazoe & Anderson, 2010).

To solve the problems of undergraduate students in Thailand and boost the ability of the students in this century, the blended instructional model via weblog should be developed, with an appropriate amount of stress placed on summary writing ability.

## Research Objectives

The research objectives were to:

1. Develop a blended instructional model via weblog to enhance English summary writing ability of Thai undergraduate students.
2. Develop the efficiency of the blended instructional model via weblog to enhance English summary writing ability of Thai undergraduate students.
3. Study English summary writing of the university students taught by the blended instructional model via weblog.
4. Study the effect of the blended instructional model via weblog on English summary writing of Thai undergraduate students.

## Literature Review

English summary writing ability is the use of the English language to write a brief account of the concepts contained within a text. This ability focuses on accuracy of information, content clarity and organization, use of different vocabulary, sentence structure, writing mechanics, and citations.

A good summary writing should be shorter than the original and be written in different words. The most important thing is that it contains all the main points of the original text, and it is composed using proper citation, thesis statements, major details, transitions, grammar and writing mechanics, and having a length of one third the original text. (Langan, 2000; MacMillan, 2009; Newman, 2009; Ramage, Bean, & Johnson, 2009).

To produce good summary writers, an effective model of instruction should be developed first. An instructional model is an explanation of learning activity procedures, teachers' roles, students' roles, and the learning environment. It consists of four components: principles, objectives, instructional activities, and evaluation. To design an effective instructional model, the developmental sequence should be considered.

A model can be developed through spiral activities consisting of analysis, design, development, implementation, and evaluation (Clark, 2000). Analysis is a contextual study to discover need and feasibility of the theoretical framework while designing instructional model for 21<sup>st</sup> century learning focuses on three aspects: (1) knowledge, work and the new economy; (2) cognitive methods of instruction; and (3) technology and training. Development takes the form of a drafted model and is explained in more detail via the four components. Implementation is used for effective model development to investigate whether learning can be improved. Evaluation appears at the end of the implementation and shows that the model is proven to produce effective results.

It is important to recognize the three drivers in the new design for building an instructional model, as proposed by Clark in 2002. The first driver responds to social need for the new economy which requires people with decision-making ability and problem-solving skills. That's the way to teach thinking to students. The second is a learning process through integration of new information and prior knowledge within an individual's memory. The process is related to the three types of memory in brain: sensory, short-term, and long-term memory. Viewing the screen of a computer monitor firstly affects learning in a sensory way, followed by the process of retrieving information in short-term memory, and then by storing permanent knowledge and skills in long-term memory. The final driver is the use of a computer as a medium for developing and revising the learning task as part of a process. This responds to the characteristics of students' learning methods in the twenty-first century. Use of these three drivers as components blended instruction should be considered for instructional model development in the twenty-first century.

Presently, modern model development is concerned with how students learn amidst the technology changes that are spreading all over the world. These changes have brought about opportunities for the use of educational technology called technology web 2.0. It provides both teachers and students with real situations for language use as two-way communication, especially when teaching writing (Crane, 2009).

Teaching writing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century could be modernized in four components as suggested by Prinz (2010); *multimodality of text* which are audio design, spatial design, visual design, and linguistic design that make the content interesting, *screens as emerging dominant media* is a monitor which is a mediated presenting writing tasks such as weblog and wikis, instead of presenting through papers, *transformation blog mode and medium constellations* are writing mode adaptation for writing process such as collaborative and online interaction, *changing social structures and relations*

is a traditional writing structure and a writing format that could be adjusted into a two-way communication which can be responding immediately. These four components make teaching writing effective in this era, when weblog is used in teaching as a tool for two-way communication.

Weblog is a tool of technology web 2.0 used for learning mediation that connects face-to-face learning and online learning. It is mediated in three ways of learning: linking to other weblogs, publishing written tasks of student writers, and performing as an electronic portfolio on the internet. Besides this, the use of weblog in social networks builds teacher-to-student friendships, students-to-student friendships, and students-to-“any other” friendships. With this communication, students improve their writing skill, being more autonomous writers, presenting their ideas freely, and posting more creative works on their weblogs (Prinz, 2010; Llach, 2010; Clark & Olson, 2010; Babaee, 2012).

On the other hand, Bahce & Taslaci (2009) found in an EFL experimental study at university level that weblogs affect EFL student writers, as they were used for language improvement, as well as for sharing and exchanging ideas, (not just for being a writing classroom). From this research finding it can be inferred that weblog, as full online learning, will not be suited for EFL learners, but will instead be used in a blended way that is more practical.

Blended instruction via weblog is a combination of in-class learning and online learning activities using weblog as a mediated form of learning. The mediation fare are used for searching among the links between learning sources in the world wide web, for publishing writing tasks, and for collecting the written tasks as portfolios that can be reached at anytime and anywhere (Lee & Lee, 2007; Oh & Park, 2009; Fujishiro & Miyaji, 2010; Prinz, 2010; Tiantong, 2011).

Considering the problems with English writing in Thailand mentioned previously, and the findings of blended instruction presented, the blended instructional model should be developed in Thai universities. Consequently, it should also be investigated whether Thai undergraduate students' summary writing ability is increased after learning via the model.

## **Related Study**

The study of blended instruction is mostly conducted in EFL context as follow:

Miyazoe & Anderson (2010) conducted an experimental study in order to study a development of writing ability and satisfaction of the 61 second year students in Tokyo University using blended instruction via weblog, forum, and wikis. The face to face activity in class and online writing practice out of class were designed and used. All students were taught via the three technology medias. The lesson started with forums for an online discussion through a key board about a reading passage whereas a blog was used for writing activity after the discussion. Then Wikis was used for translating from English into Japanese for collaboration. All activity was done once a week. For writing, students practiced on blogs and a teacher also followed their progress via blogs. The finding were revealed that the students presented their positive attitudes to the blended instruction and the students has shown their writing progression as they used higher level of vocabulary and more complex of sentence writing.

In the same year, Kizil & Arslan (2010) found a significance of his blended instruction study through experimental research. The aim of the study was to study EFL writing integrated to process writing via weblog. A group of samples used in the study were 27 students who were studying English as a foreign language in Turkey University for 16 weeks. The group of students owned two blogs for each, for publish writing tasks and for follow up tasks. The tutor's blog was used for material delivery on line. The finding has shown that weblog affected writing performance in all

aspects, weblogs affected writing learning in all steps, weblogs affected feedback and revising writing task, and weblogs positively affected interest and motivation in using technology for learning.

Oh and Park (2009) surveyed the use of blended instruction and attitude of the university lecturers in Korea through questionnaires. All participants were 151 lectures from 33 different universities and representative teaching official from Office of the Higher Education Commission of Korea. The finding were revealed that 1) 64.4 percents of the lecturers used online instructional materials in class 2) 95.9 of the participants designed, developed, and revised online learning materials with the positive attitude towards blended instruction. 3) 70.6 percents of lectures were lack of motivation and 61.8 percents were also lack of enthusiasm in using blended instruction. They all need supporting facilities from faculties which is workshop about instructional design and technology that supports blended instruction in order to increase the use of blended instruction at tertiary level in the country.

Bahce and Taslaci (2009) had conducted an experimental research in order to study writing ability of the students using blended instruction via weblog learning and face-to-face learning. 55 students of Anadolu University in Turkey were used in this study for 1 year (around the year 2007-2008). Teaching time is 6 hours a week. Learning activities were weblog orientation, face-to-face learning, and writing practice via blogs. At the end of the study, the results indicated that 1) blog is an interaction resource in real life which the students can directly experience in three folds: learning output, technology, creativity, and learning innovation. 2) Blogs is an effective learning resource that provides real effective learning output 3) blog provides opportunity for interaction at anytime and anywhere with unlimited learning. 4) Blogs is a place for collaborative resource for language development, not a language classroom.

In conclusion, blended instruction via weblog can probably enhance the university students' summary writing in effective ways. The idea of blended instruction is designed for orientation first, and then flowed by both in class and out of class activity via weblogs.

### **Methodology and Methods**

The mixed methodology was conducted in academic year 2010-2013 with four phases: analyzing context using a qualitative procedure, synthesizing the instructional model using document analysis, developing the model's efficiency through action research, and study the effect of the model on English summary writing ability of the university students. To achieve the objective of the study, it was conducted and implemented in academic year 2010-2013 as shown in figure 1 below:

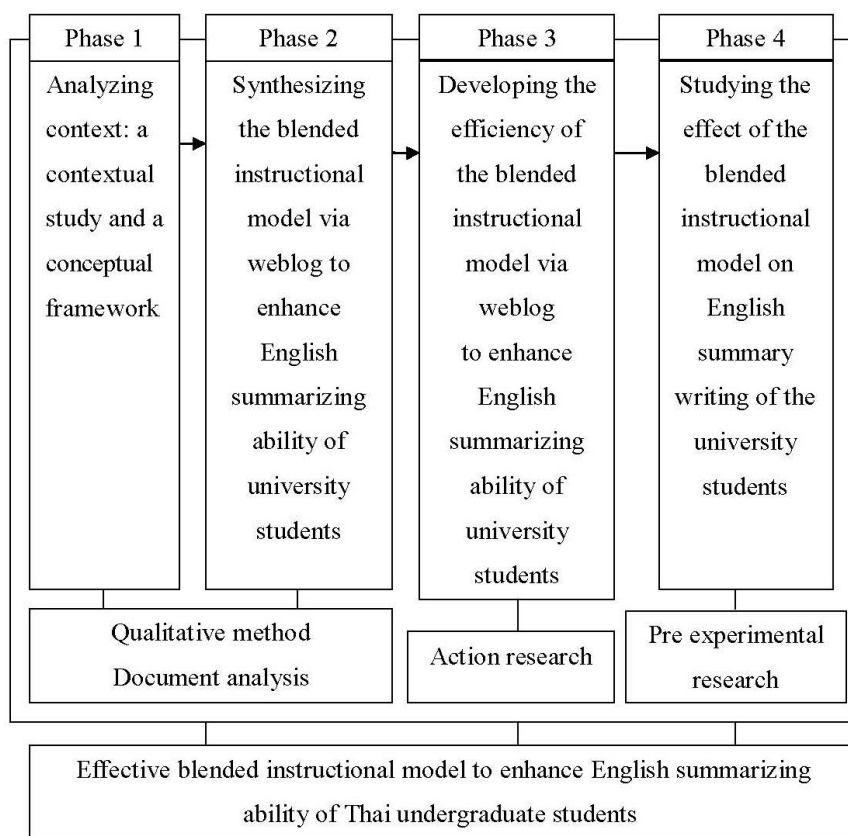


Figure 1. Phases of the study

Figure 1 shows phases of the study which can be explained as follows:

**Phase 1:** Analyzing context. The objectives of this phase were to study some vital information of undergraduate students at Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University, concerning their problem-solving of English summary writing ability, and to study a conceptual framework. Participants were composed of thirty students majoring in English. Other participants were two selected lecturers in the English program. Data collection was informal interview using semi-structured interview form and a test. After that document analysis from various sources was reviewed and analyzed. Then typology technique was used to categorize the information. The output was a conceptual framework prepared for the instructional model design and construction.

**Phase 2:** Synthesizing the instructional model. The objective of this phase was to construct the instructional model. It was constructed via the conceptual framework without participants. The instructional model was synthesized and quality-checked its construct validity by three experts. The experts were qualified in curriculum and instruction, specific in teaching English of at least 10 years of teaching English experience at the university level. The output of this phase was a proposed blended instructional model via weblog for enhancing summary writing ability of Thai undergraduate students.

**Phase 3:** Developing the model's efficiency. The objective of this phase was to develop the efficiency and effectiveness of the proposed instructional model using action research. It was implemented through three action research cycles (Costello, 2003). The criterion was set at 80 percent of the target group achieving the English summary writing criterion at 70 percent of the total post-test scores. Fourteen students majoring in English of Nakhon Ratchasima Rajabhat University were volunteers as a target group. The instruments used were lesson plans, a semi-

structured interview form, the learning and instructional record format, the record format of individualized ability development, efficient writing criteria, and an effective test for English summary writing.

Eight experts were used in this phase. Three of them were phase-two experts for examining and quality-checking the model and its lesson plan, a semi-structured interview form, the learning and instructional record format, the record format of individualized ability development, efficient writing criteria, and an effective test for English summary writing. Another three experts were qualified in master degree in English and teaching English as a foreign language and hold a certificate in testing and material production for examining and quality-checking a scoring rubric. Another two experts were qualified in master degree in English and English Study and have at least teaching English experience of the campus for 3-5 years for being co-raters of the scoring rubrics with a researcher.

The average mean score of construct validity among three experts was 3.89; its quality was at a very good level of construction according to theories contained in the conceptual framework. Average scores of reliability among three experts of the proposed model, lesson plan, the record format of individualized ability development, the learning and instructional record format, teaching behavior record format, learning behavior record format, and a semi-structured interview form were 4.08, 4.00, 3.80, 3.92, 3.92, 4.00, and 3.67, respectively. Also, a writing criterion had its validity at 4.00 with its relevancy among three raters considered in three couples were at 0.73, 0.75, and 0.79 which were at a very high reliability for those written test that could be evaluated by anyone. Besides, an average score of IOC index among three experts of a written test of English summary writing was at 1.00.

The target group took a pre-test then studied a summary writing via the proposed model and its quality-checked lesson plan for three cycles. During each cycle of action research was done, the data were gathered via a semi-structured interview form, the learning and instructional record format, the record format of individualized ability development, and efficient writing criteria. Instructional activities were altered according to unsatisfied data from each cycle, until the set criterion was achieved. The group took posttest at the end of the study. The data were then analyzed by percentage, means, standard deviation, and the t-test for dependent samples. The output is an efficient blended instructional model via weblog to enhance English summary writing of Thai under graduate students.

**Phase 4:** Studying the effect of the efficient blended instructional model. The objective of this phase was to investigate the effect of the efficient model on English summary writing of university students. A “one group post-test only design” was used as a research design at this phase. The criterion was set at 80 percent of the students achieving the English summary writing criterion at 75 percent of the total post-test scores. A sample group was formed of forty-one students majoring in English who registered for an academic writing course in semester 2 of academic year 2013. The instruments were all taken from phase 3. The data were then analyzed by using percentage. The output was the effective blended instructional model via weblog to enhance English summary writing for Thai undergraduate students.

## Results

1. A proposed blended instructional model via weblog to enhance English summary writing ability of Thai undergraduate students was synthesized based on the conceptual framework. All instruction activities were described in the five components: background of the model, locating model components, principles, objectives, contents, learning activities, media, and assessment and



evaluation. The instruction consisted of preparations, taking notes, summarizing, and publishing. The first three were face-to-face activities, whereas the fourth was on weblog.

2. After three cycles of action research, the proposed model was found to be effective. The model was revised by changing some learning activities based on the qualitative data from the students' interview. Then, two phases of instruction were carried out: the preparatory phase and the instructional phase. The first one concerning the lecturer's and the student's preparation for teaching and learning, and medias preparation relating to the tutor's and students' weblogs. The second is the instructional phase containing three stages of instruction. Firstly, extracting information involves four activities in class: surveying text, identifying key sentences, taking notes, and analyzing key-words. Secondly, summary writing via weblog comprised of three activities in process writing; drafting, reviewing and revising, and editing. The final stage of instruction: publishing on weblog comprises uploading files, studying comments, selecting possible comments, and visiting classmates' weblogs.

According to the three-staged activities of the instructional model, it was also found in cycle 3 that 100 percent of the students had achieved the writing criterion set at 70 percent (34 scores) of the total post-test scores as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Post-test scores of the students compared to the set criterion at 70 percent of the total scores (34 scores; N=14).

Test	Total scores	Average ) $\bar{X}$ (	Numbers of students passed	Percentage of students passed
Posttest	48	41.43	14	100

Table 1 shows post-test scores of the students compared to the setting criterion at 70 percent of the total scores. It was revealed that the average score that students obtained was 41.43, with 100 percents of students achieving the criterion at 70 percent of the total post-test scores.

3. It was also revealed that the post-test scores of the students after the model implementation was higher than the pretest scores at .05 level of significance as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. A summary of writing ability pretest and post-test scores after teaching through the use of the proposed model.

Test	N	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	t	Sig.
Pretest	14	22.7857	3.23867	14.945*	.000
Posttest	14	41.4286	3.79705		

\* significant level .05

Table 2 shows a summary of writing ability pretest and post-test scores after teaching through the use of the proposed model. It was revealed that post-test scores were higher than pretest scores at .05 level of significance. From the results in table 1 and 2, it can be concluded that after teaching using the proposed model, the students significantly improved their summary writing ability.

4. After teaching with the effective model using pre-experimental research, it was revealed that more than 80 percent of the students achieved the writing criterion set at 75 percent of the total post-test scores as shown in table 3.

Table 3. Average post-test scores for English summary writing compared to the set criterion at 75 percent (36 scores) of the total scores (48 scores) N=41).

Test	Total scores	Number of students	Number of students passed	Average $\bar{X}$ (	Percentage of students passed
Posttest	48	41	41	43.88	100

Table 3 shows post-test scores of the students compared to the set criterion at 75 percent of the total scores. It was revealed that the average scores students obtained was 43.88, with more than 80 percents of the students achieving the criterion at 75 percent of the total posttest scores.

For qualitative data gathered during three action research cycle, they affected the instructional activities lead to some changes of instructional activities as shown in figure 2 below:

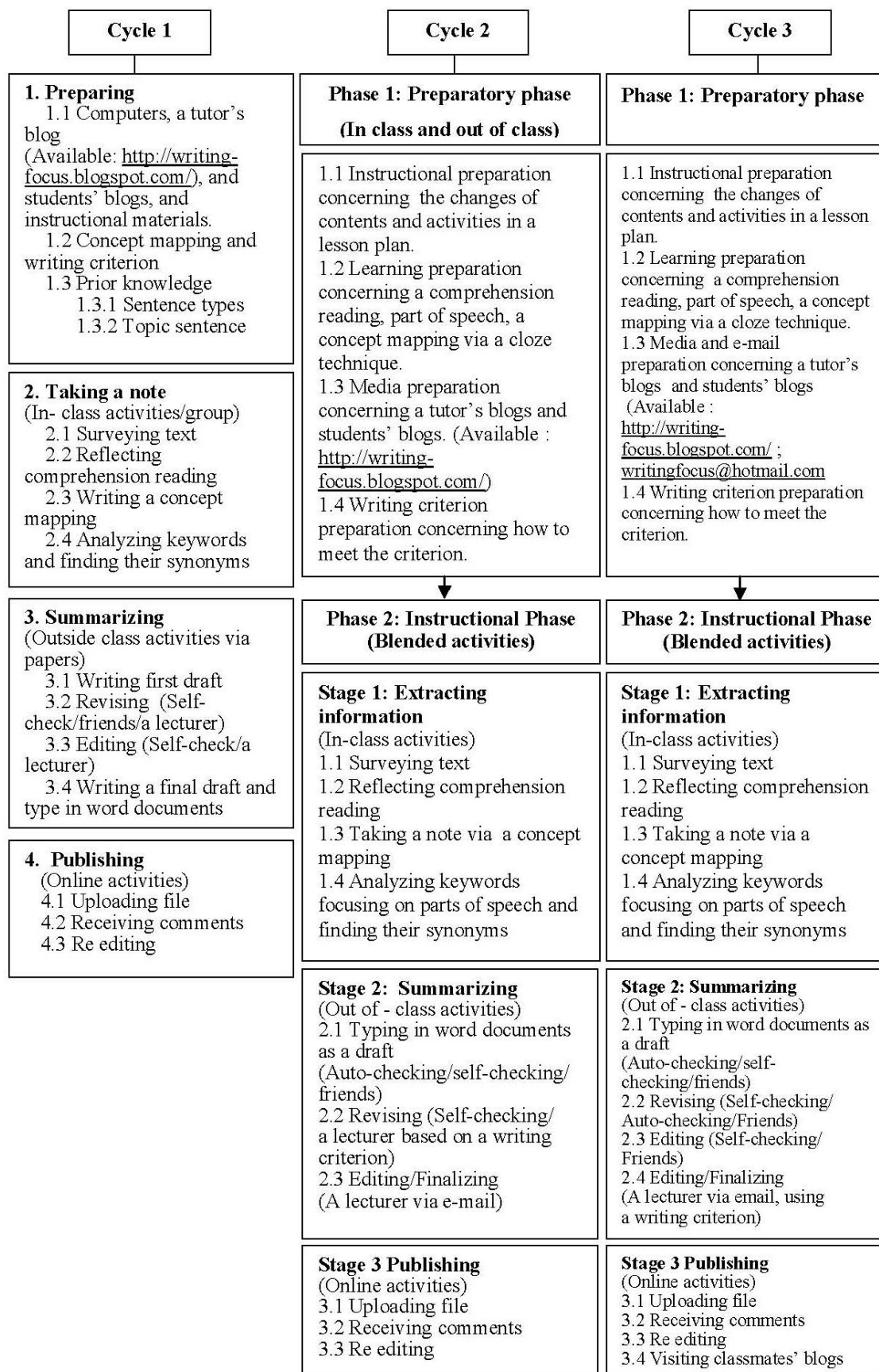


Figure 2. Changes of instructional activities among three cycles of the action research.

Figure 2 show the changes of instructional activities among three cycles of the action research. Considering cycle three, the instructional model was effective, as the criterion was achieved by 100 percent of the students, with its activities comprised two preparatory phases and three instructional stages as follow:

1. The preparatory phase. There are three activities for teachers and students;
  - 1.1. Lecturer's preparation for teaching.
  - 1.2. Student's preparation for learning.
  - 1.3. Medias preparation concerning the tutor's and students' weblogs.
2. The instructional phase. The instructional phase containing three stages of instruction;
  - 2.1. Extracting information involves four activities in class: surveying text, identifying key sentences, taking notes, and analyzing key-words.
  - 2.2. Summary writing via weblog comprised three activities in process writing; drafting, reviewing and revising, and editing.
  - 2.3. Publishing on weblog comprises uploading files, studying comments, selecting possible comments, and visiting classmates' weblogs.

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the model constructed by the researcher was effective, as it increased student's English summary writing ability at all phases of the study. At the end of the study, the model was named "S2A Model" (S two A Model) which stands for "Summary Writing in Academic Area Model".

### **Discussion**

The model is effective in enhancing writing ability of the students as shown in table 1-3. The effectiveness may be due to the following reasons:

1. The model is designed based on drivers of the new instructional design that develop problem-solving skills, thinking skills, and writing skills via technology web 2.0. In other words; they learned and practiced using searching skills, chunking skills, and using computer skills. These abilities supported their writing skills by helping them discover vocabularies they needed via the links between networks, grouping the main points leading to accurate summarizing, and conveniently producing and publishing their written tasks via two-way communication technology. Therefore, the criterion was achieved both in phase 3 and 4. The result is related to the ideas of Clark (2002) who stated that modernized instructional design responds to computer literacy, which in turn support writing literacy of students in this era.
2. The model consisted of a combination of face-to-face learning activity (in class) and online practice activity via weblog (out of class); therein focusing on collaboration among students in a learning environment with interesting technology. Students acquire accuracy of knowledge along the correct methods used for finding it in terms of the right citation through the use of online learning supports and group works. This resulted in students obtaining direct experience during their face-to-face activities in class. When writing, they would receive feedback from the teacher that affected their self-practice out-of-class in positive way. Thus the model is effective in increasing students' writing ability. The result is related to the finding of Kizil & Arslan (2010) that positive feedback via learning supports are caused by effective blended instruction via weblog.

3. Weblog helps in solving writing problems such as using words in context, grammar, sentence types, and writing mechanics that students can access from the links a teacher provides in the tutor's blog. This is the help that students need while writing when they are both in and out of class. Also, weblog plays an important role in terms of an electronic portfolio that can be reached at anytime and anywhere, a place for sharing and publishing their written assignments, and having interaction among friends by linking to each other's weblogs. Furthermore, after face to face activity, students practiced on weblogs, with a teacher also following their progress via weblogs. This boosted the effectiveness of the model as shown in the study.

The finding was similar to the research results of Bahce & Taslaci (2009), Miyazoe and Anderson (2010), and Babee (2012) who reported that weblog was a place for online collaborative learning during completion of the assignments, and it was two-way communication that helped students improve their summary writing skill via interaction.

4. The findings showed that the blended instructional model via weblog is effective. It clearly revealed its effectiveness with its blended learning activities both in and out of class. The model led the students to boost their writing summary skills, as they summarized using more academic vocabulary, accurate punctuation, accurate content and clarity, and accurate citation. These abilities result from the effective learning activities included in the model. The successful finding is related to the results of Bahce and Taslaci (2009), Kizil & Arslan (2010), and Miyazoe & Anderson (2010) who found significant results which showed that undergraduate students acquired effective writing skills after they were taught using blended instruction via weblog.

### **Conclusions**

According to the results of each phase of the study, it can be concluded that the blended instructional model via weblog was effective with its steps of instruction that significantly enhanced the English summary writing of Thai undergraduate students.

The out- put of this study was the effective model of instruction to enhance English summary writing ability of Thai university students. The model was synthesized and explained in four components: Principles, objectives, instructional activities, and evaluation techniques.

The instructional activities consisted of the following activities:

1. The preparatory phase. There are three activities for teachers and students: (1.1) Lecturer's preparation for teaching. (1.2) Student's preparation for learning. And (1.3) Medias preparation concerning the tutor's and students' weblogs.

2. The instructional phase. The instructional phase contains three stages of instruction: (2.1) Extracting information involves four activities in class: surveying text, identifying key sentences, taking notes, and analyzing key-words. (2.2) Summary writing via weblog comprised three activities in process writing; drafting, reviewing and revising, and editing. (2.3) Publishing on weblog comprises uploading files, studying comments, selecting possible comments, and visiting classmates' weblogs.

The model is effective as the finding is revealed that it had enhanced the summary writing ability of the Thai undergraduate students. Therefore, the blended instructional model via weblog to enhance English summary writing of university students constructed by the researcher or "S2A Model" is the effective model of instruction that is practical in teaching summary writing in Thai university.

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