ES1103

English for Academic Purposes

TUTORIAL 4 (PART A)

Centre for English Language Communication

Course Coordinator:
Dr Abdel Halim Sykes

NUS
National University
of Singapore

Writing Cohesive Texts

Tutorial Learning Outcomes

By the end of this tutorial, you should be better able to:

- recognise the general structure of a problem-solution essay and other academic texts
- analyse the linguistic features needed to guide your reader along the logical development of your essay (Toolkit 1 on Cohesion)
- incorporate these linguistic features in your essays to improve flow
- write the thesis statement and the topic sentences for your problem solution essay

Introduction

Good writing is like weaving. As you write, you must weave evidence and supporting information into the main strands that are the thesis, the key ideas of the essay.
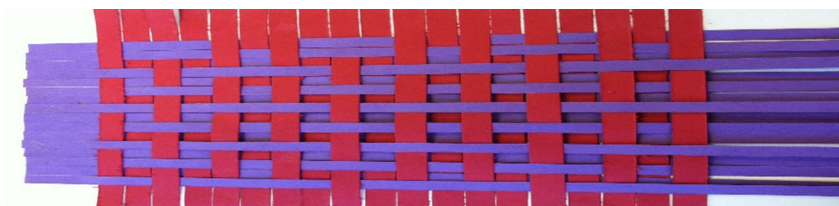
You should use a range of features to refer back and carry the reader forward on a smooth reading experience. Also, you need to constantly catch a previous thread to develop your essay to create patterns that flow through your writing. To develop these skills, in this tutorial, we consider some important tools and techniques that are used to create this flow to produce a cohesive text.

Cohesion in Writing

A useful, effective and simple way to understand the basics of cohesion in writing is to identify a text on two key levels: the **macro themes** and **hyper themes**. Your reader should be able to easily see the logical development of your essay and follow your points or argument from the first paragraph to the last.

This cohesion can be achieved by having clear
- **Macro theme** (thesis)
- **Hyper themes** (topic sentences)
- **Macro new** (conclusion)
- **Hyper new** (concluding sentences)

The **macro theme** (thesis) is the **main purpose of the text**, the main message. This thesis is then developed (explained and justified) in the paragraphs.

We use the term **hyper theme** to stress the difference from the simple notion of a 'topic sentence' as the **paragraph's main idea**. A hyper theme, which is usually the first sentence in the paragraph, does much more than present the main idea. It also **links back to the previous paragraph's** content by showing how this new paragraph develops the last point in order to **support the thesis**.

To ensure cohesion at the macro and hyper levels, we can use features in **Linguistic Toolkit 1**.

Toolkit 1 – Textual Cohesion

Purpose

To create texts that flow logically and represent your views more persuasively

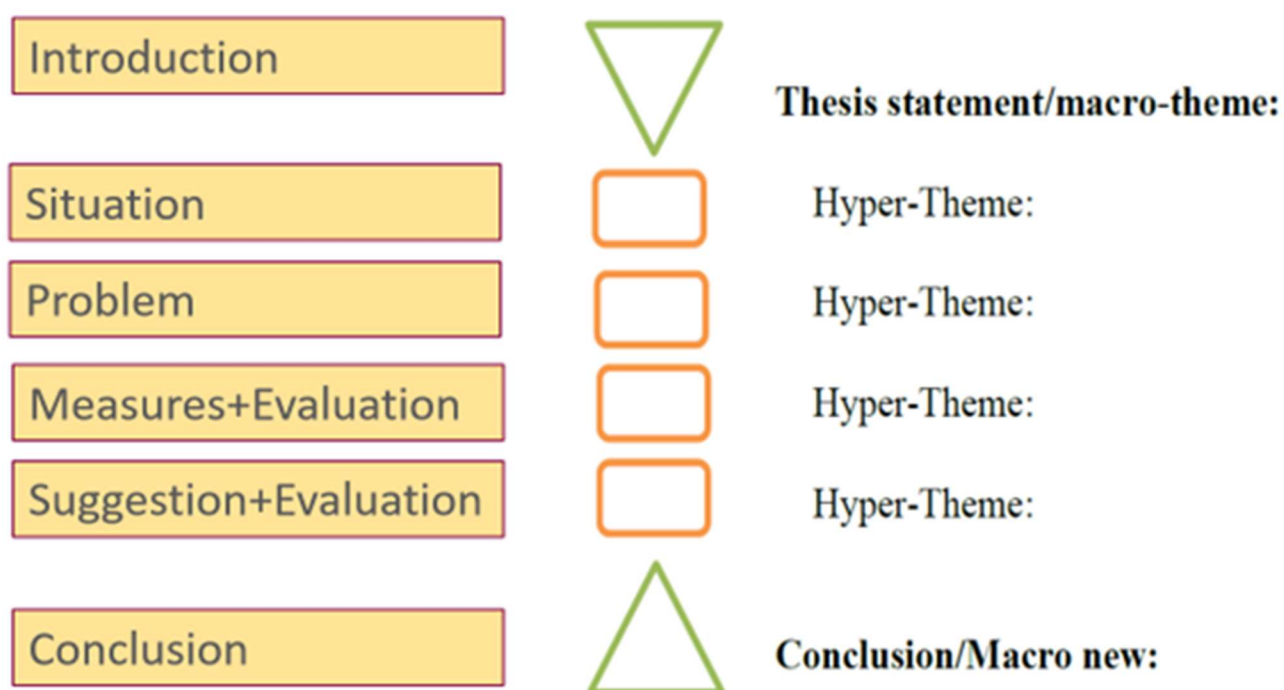| Features |
| --- |
| Macro theme (Thesis statement) |
| Hyper themes (Topic Sentences) |
| General nouns (problems, causes, effect, impact, reasons, issue) Nominalisation (experimentation, investigation, formulation) Referencing pronouns and other words (shopping centres→ they→ such places) Conjunctions/linkers (however, as a result) |
| Thematic progression (information flow) (A→ B B→C A→ B A→C) |
| Paragraph cohesion |
| Lexical chains (Hong Kong→ the SAR → the territory→ the city) Reference and substitutions (shopping centres→ they→ such places) Lexical field/sets (related words) (computer components, printers, CPUs, memory chips, high tech equipment) |
| **This is the toolkit to produce texts that flow well.** |

This tutorial focuses on three key aspects of cohesion: **macro and hyper themes**, **paragraph cohesion** and **thematic progression**. The ability to use these features effectively is extremely important for developing your academic writing skills.

Macro Theme

A Macro theme (thesis) should be a **precise response to the** question or problem raised in the essay **prompt**.

You may use some general nouns in the scope, where you announce what the essay will cover, but the **macro theme should be a full sentence that responds to the prompt explicitly**.

In the case of your problem-solution essay for CA2-CA5, the macro theme must state the specific problem you are discussing. The **macro structure of problem-solution essays** often follows the flow in the example below.

Introduction	▽	**Thesis statement/macro-theme:**
Situation	▢	Hyper-Theme:
Problem	▢	Hyper-Theme:
Measures+Evaluation	▢	Hyper-Theme:
Suggestion+Evaluation	▢	Hyper-Theme:
Conclusion	△	**Conclusion/Macro new:**

Hyper Themes

Hyper themes can be developed to strengthen cohesion in a text by applying several features to the writing. The most common linguistic features used in hyper themes are listed below.

- **referencing words** (these, this, such + noun)
- **general nouns** (way, notion, idea, concept, reasons, point, issues, impact, factors, facets)
- **general pronouns** summarise previous concepts in the text (this, these) and/or indicate what will be discussed in the next sentences
- **conjunctions** or linking expressions (beyond these, also, Furthermore…)
- **thematic progression** the NEW from the previous paragraph or sentence is used as the THEME in this sentence

The key purpose of hyper themes is to address the thesis by making clear, tight and logical connections between ideas that support and provide detail for the macro theme of the paper.

Now that you have some idea of what is meant by macro theme and hyper theme, let's check your understanding.

Task 1

Read the first paragraph of a text given below and consider the following points. Be prepared to discuss your ideas in the tutorial.

- In which part of the introductory paragraph would you expect to find the macro theme and the hyper themes?

- Identify the macro theme and the hyper themes.

- What are some of the linguistic features used to structure the text effectively?

A popular niche tourism, wildlife tourism, has caught the public attention as a controversial type of tourism. Wildlife tourism, best described as an act of tourism that involves watching and interacting with the wildlife components, may help to conserve the tourism site's ecological identity, but on the other hand has a potential to generate destructive impacts on the habitat (Tapper & Waedt, 2006), as is the case in Okavango Delta. Okavango Delta in Botswana, claimed as the last Eden of Africa, is a prominent endangered-wildlife concession site surrounded by the Moremi Game Reserve and the Xakanava camp site (UNESCO, 2014). Mbaiwa (2009) shows that the number of tourists visiting Okavango Delta has increased by 13.7% each yearin the last decade and will reach 3 million tourists by 2020. However, as Tapper & Waedt (2006) indicate, overcrowded wildlife tourism site such as Okavango Delta, have started to inevitable negative impacts on the environment. This essay will describe a negative impact of wildlife tourism in Okavango Delta, focusing on the invasive species interference which is slowly destroying the original ecosystem. It will then explain why the current approach to addressing this problem lacks effectiveness and will suggest improved ways to eradicate the introduced species.
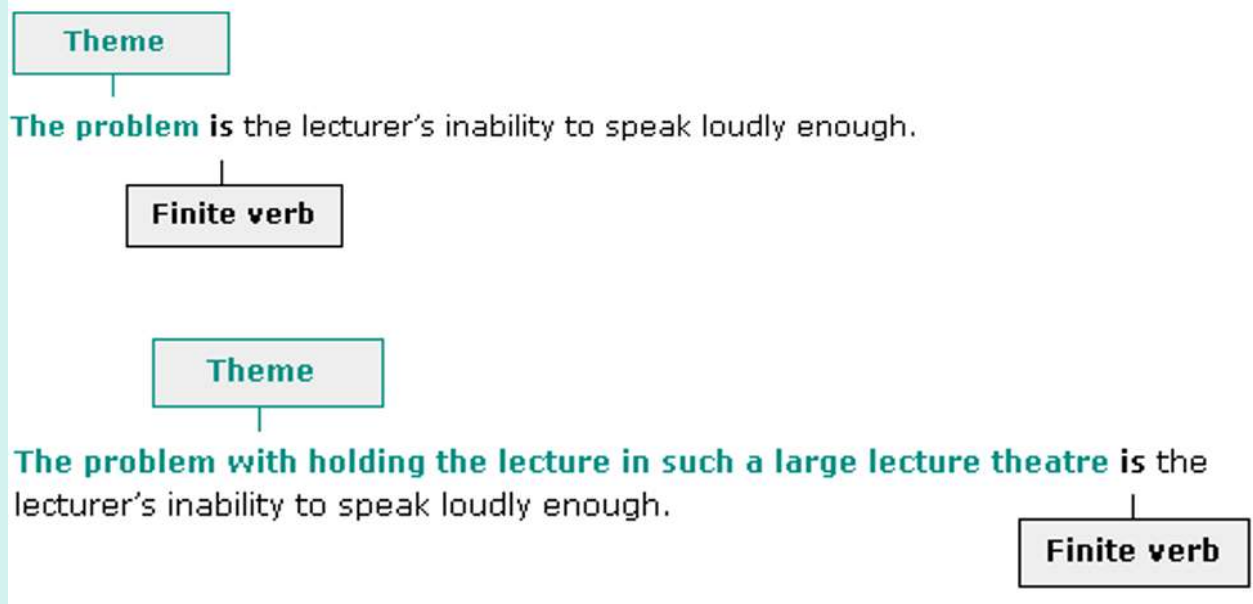
Paragraph Cohesion

Cohesion at the paragraph level means that you structure paragraphs so that your **points or argument flow well** from one sentence to the next. There should be **no gaps in information** or logic that leave the reader confused as to what you are trying to convey.

Toolkit 1 features for paragraph cohesion are:
- **theme choice and thematic progression** ensures that the ideas and concepts are picked up in subsequent parts of the text and that the start of each sentence refers to or is connected to something previously stated
- **lexical cohesion** means creating word chains to refer to the same concept throughout the text
- **conjunctions and linkers** ensure that the logical relations between ideas (cause, comparison, effect) are clear
- **referencing words** are used so concepts can be picked up again without repeating the same word (this is also part of the lexical chains)
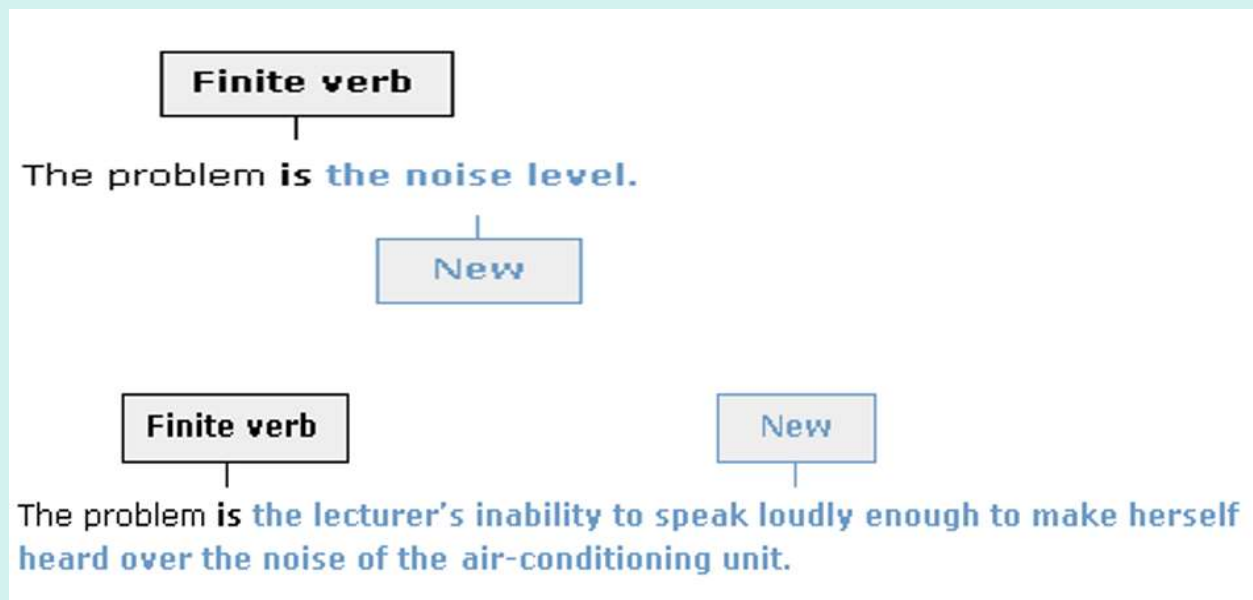
Here, we focus specifically on **theme choice and thematic progression** at the sentence and paragraph levels. Consider the following two examples.

Example 1: theme choice and thematic progression

The problem **is** the lecturer's inability to speak loudly enough.

The problem with holding the lecture in such a large lecture theatre **is** the lecturer's inability to speak loudly enough.

Adapted from: writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au

Example 2: theme and NEW information

The problem **is** the noise level.

The problem **is** the lecturer's inability to speak loudly enough to make herself heard over the noise of the air-conditioning unit.

Adapted from: writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au

In both examples, '**Theme**' refers to the beginning of the sentence (the segment before the main verb). This tells the reader **the topic of the sentence**.

'**NEW**' refers to the rest of the sentence: the new **information you are communicating about the theme**.

By developing **a chain of theme and NEW**, theme and NEW, theme and NEW from one sentence to the next, you can construct well-formed sentences and develop these into tightly-structured paragraphs that have no gaps in the flow of ideas.

Now, try to identify the Theme and the NEW in each of the following sentences. What pattern do you see in the relationship between one sentence and the next?

My mother is a doctor. As a doctor, she treats a variety of patients. Some of these people have minor ailments while others have more severe and chronic illnesses. The chronic diseases she treats include cancer, heart disease and diabetes.

In the example above, the theme appears at the beginning of each sentence and the NEW follows in the second half of the sentence. You should also see a common pattern. That is, **the NEW of the first sentence becomes the theme of the following sentence**. This pattern is repeated as the paragraph progresses.

My mother is a doctor. As a doctor, she treats a variety of patients. Some of these people have minor ailments while others have more severe and chronic illnesses. The chronic diseases she treats include cancer, heart disease and diabetes.
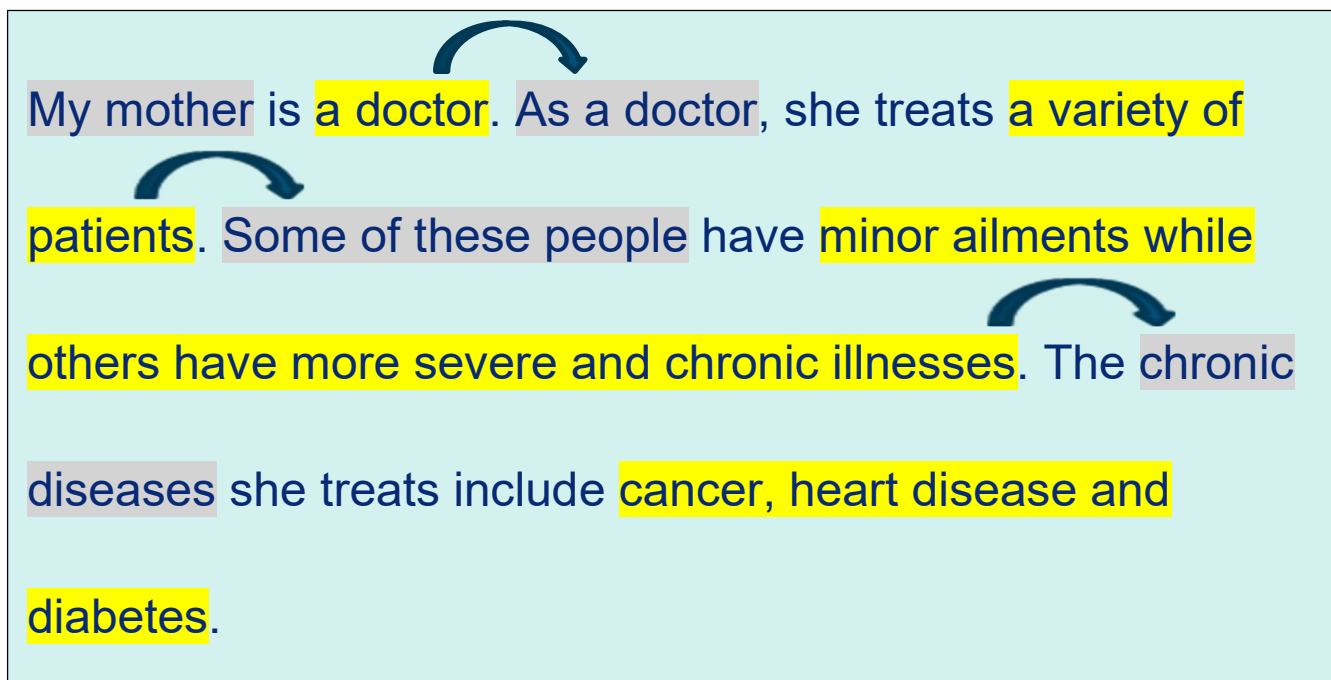
By using this technique in your writing, you will ensure that there is strong cohesion at both the sentence and paragraph levels with all sentences adding to the overall logical progression and being directly related to the hyper or macro themes.

Think of constructing a paragraph as building with Lego. The structure is sound because **all the parts are connected tightly**.
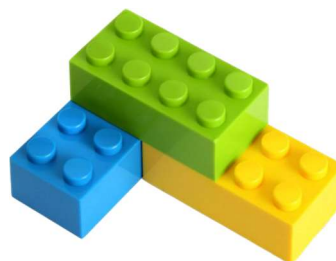
Thematic Progression

Thematic progression refers to the ways **themes pick up information** that is already in the text and **move the ideas forward**. Think back to the analogy of weaving.

You have considered the **theme and NEW** approach to building paragraphs to maintain tight cohesion. This technique can be used in tandem with other ways to ensure cohesion by creating and adhering to specific patterns to present ideas.

There are three common and effective patterns to ensure good thematic progression in your writing.

- **linear**
- **zigzag**
- **fan**

Linear Progression	Zigzag Progression	Fan Progression

Pattern 1: Linear Progression

With linear progression, the **same theme is continued throughout the paragraph** with **new information** about that theme being introduced **in each new sentence**.

Theme A   New
Theme A   New
Theme A   New
Theme A   New

## Pattern 2: Zigzag Progression

With zigzag progression, a **new theme is introduced in the second half of each sentence** with **new information** about that theme being introduced **in the next sentence.**

Theme A   New (B)
Theme B   New C
Theme C   New D
Theme D   New E

Pattern 3: Fan Progression

With fan progression, **all the themes are stated in the sentence** and **presented individually in later sentences**.

Theme A   New (B, C, D)

Theme B   New

Theme C   New

Theme D   New
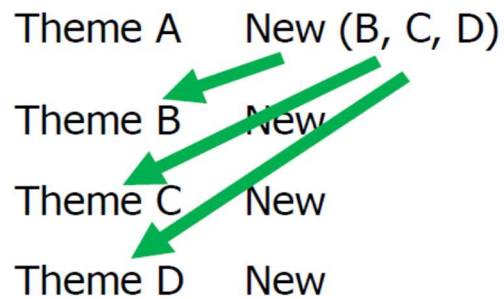
Knowing that you have limited choice as to how you start a sentence is very useful.

When you are stuck at the end of a sentence, you now know that your reader expects you to start the new sentence with either
- the Theme you used in the previous sentence (Pattern1: linear), or
- the NEW in your previous sentence (Pattern 2: zigzag).

Also, hyper themes often make use of Pattern 3: Fan because this allows you to present a wide concept and to break it down and develop it in the paragraph. Fan progression is also commonly found in the latter part of introductory paragraphs.

Now that you have been introduced to the three common patterns of thematic progression, let's see how well you can identify those patterns.

Task 2

Read the following paragraph.
- Identify and highlight the themes.
- What pattern of thematic progression is used?
- Be prepared to discuss your ideas in the tutorial.

In December 2019, a previously unknown virus was identified in Wuhan, China, after several people fell ill with flu-like symptoms. The Novel Coronavirus spread extremely quickly before the authorities issued warnings to the general population. The contagion continued to grow at an alarming rate despite measures taken to slow its spread. Covid-19, the name given to the virus by the World Health Organisation, had killed more people by mid-February 2020 than the total number of deaths for the SARS epidemic in 2003-2004.

Read the following paragraph.
- Identify and highlight the themes.
- What pattern of thematic progression is used?
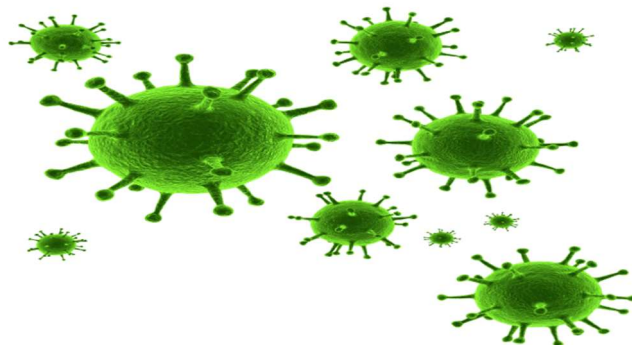- Be prepared to discuss your ideas in the tutorial.

The World Health Organisation has expressed concern over Covid-19, a newly identified virus that spreads rapidly. In recent weeks, it has spread not only from person to person, but also from one country to another. The first country where the virus appeared was China, but it was soon found in other Asian countries, such as Thailand and Singapore. In Singapore, the authorities took immediate action to slow the spread of infection. Actions to curb contagion in Singapore included quarantining suspected sufferers and carriers of the virus, curtailment of public events, and advice on personal safety precautions. Personal precautions such as frequent handwashing, wearing of masks, and temperature monitoring can all help in controlling the spread of Covid-19.

Task 4

Read the following paragraph.

- Identify and highlight the themes.
- What pattern of thematic progression is used?
- Be prepared to discuss your ideas in the tutorial.

The rapid spread of Covid-19 has led to the urgent need to understand what the virus is, what the symptoms are, and how it is transmitted. Like other coronaviruses, Covid-19 has come from animals and initially infected people who came into contact with live or newly-slaughtered animals. Those who have fallen ill with the virus suffer coughs, fever and breathing difficulties, and in severe cases there can be organ failure. Initial transmission was from animals to humans, but there is human to human transmission through close contact and exchange of droplets from coughing and touching with unwashed hands.
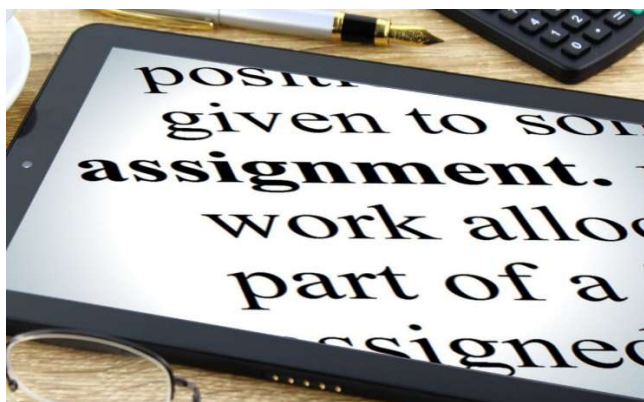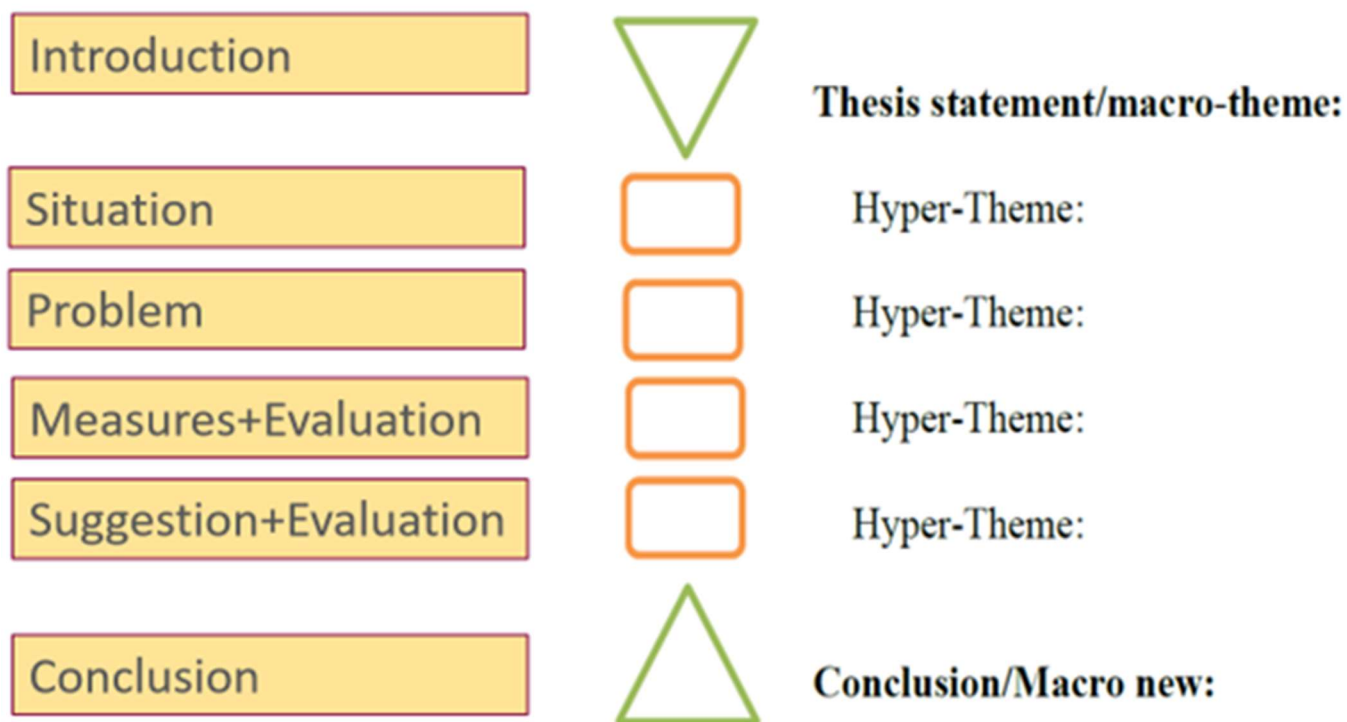
Task 5

Read the paragraph below. It's the same paragraph you studied in Task 1.

- Identify and highlight the themes.
- What pattern or patterns of thematic progression are used?
- Be prepared to discuss your ideas in the tutorial.

A popular niche tourism, wildlife tourism, has caught the public attention as a controversial type of tourism. Wildlife tourism, best described as an act of tourism that involves watching and interacting with the wildlife components, may help to conserve the tourism site's ecological identity, but on the other hand has a potential to generate destructive impacts on the habitat (Tapper & Waedt, 2006), as is the case in Okavango Delta. Okavango Delta in Botswana, claimed as the last Eden of Africa, is a prominent endangered-wildlife concession site surrounded by the Moremi Game Reserve and the Xakanava camp site (UNESCO, 2014). Mbaiwa (2009) shows that the number of tourists visiting Okavango Delta has increased by 13.7% each yearin the last decade and will reach 3 million tourists by 2020. However, as Tapper & Waedt (2006) indicate, overcrowded wildlife tourism site such as Okavango Delta, have started to inevitable negative impacts on the environment. This essay will describe a negative impact of wildlife tourism in Okavango Delta, focusing on the invasive species interference which is slowly destroying the original ecosystem. It will then explain why the current approach to addressing this problem lacks effectiveness and will suggest improved ways to eradicate the introduced species.

Applying Macro Themes and Hyper Themes to Your Writing

Start thinking about how you might use this macro structure for your problem-solution essay, and consider the most suitable macro and hyper themes and patterns of thematic progression.

Introduction	▽	Thesis statement/macro-theme:
Situation	▢	Hyper-Theme:
Problem	▢	Hyper-Theme:
Measures+Evaluation	▢	Hyper-Theme:
Suggestion+Evaluation	▢	Hyper-Theme:
Conclusion	△	Conclusion/Macro new:

In this tutorial, we have considered some key features and techniques of how to establish and maintain good cohesion within a piece of writing. Some of these techniques might be new to you, so you must familiarise yourself with them and practise using them in your academic written assignments. Controlling cohesion in your writing will help you to guide your reader closely and effectively through the points or arguments you make within a clear framework for the presentation of your ideas.

In the next tutorial, we will focus on more specific techniques and skills to develop well-written and effective introductions.