Writing cohesive texts

Objectives

By the end of the lesson, you will be 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 your texts' flow (and address any lecturer's comment on lack of cohesion in your writing).
- Write the thesis statement and the topic sentences for your problem/solution essay

Preparation before class:

You should read and complete the tasks on thematic progression on:

http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m3/m3u5/m3u5s3/m3u5s3_1.htm

Key words: Introduction, Thesis statement (Macro-theme), Topic Sentences (Hyper theme), Nominalisation, Theme and New, General nouns, Referencing, Lexical chains and lexical sets, Linkers (conjunctions)

1. Text analysis for cohesion

a) Macro Structure - Cohesion starts with the macro structure of your essay. Your reader should be able to easily follow your argument/development from the first paragraph to the last. To ensure this, you can use the tools of **Macro Theme** (Thesis) and **Hyper Themes** (topic sentences) as well as **Macro New** (conclusion) and **Hyper-new** (concluding sentences)

   i. The **Macro Theme/thesis** is the main purpose of your text, the main message (what we called the Level 1 information in the summary handout). This thesis is then developed (explained) in the paragraphs.

   ii. **Hyper-Themes/topic sentences**: Each paragraph should clearly link to the thesis (showing how it relates to it or supports it). To do this, you should use a hyper-theme which links the previous paragraph with the current one. The hyper-theme usually encapsulates the previous paragraph and links it to the current paragraph's main point.

Why do we use these new terms? The actual terms are not important and you can continue to use 'topic sentence, thesis' if you are familiar with them. However, in ES1103, we will go into much more detail than what is usually taught about the common terms. So we use these new terms simply to remind you that there is much more to a hyper theme than the fact that it introduces the main idea of a paragraph (which is the usual understanding for 'topic sentence').

Task 1: Examine the hyper theme below from a text from by a social science student..

1. Discuss the following:
   What might the macro theme be? What was the likely hyper theme of the previous paragraph? What was the likely hyper theme of the paragraph?
2. Discuss how the structure of this hyper theme help the reader follow the writer's ideas.

   "The effects of migration on people and communities are as varied as the reasons for leaving one's country."

> **Task 2:** Look at the outline of the text on migration below and observe the way the writer has used language to structure the flow of the text and guide the reader with clear signposts.

Paragraph		Linguistic features
1 (introduction) Macro-Theme (thesis statement)	[…]Nevertheless, recent research from academics and organisations such as the United Nations have started to shed light on this evolving and multi-faceted phenomenon helping to make current migration motives as well as impact better understood.	Use of general nouns to signpost what is coming next in the texts/announce the overall plan.
1. Body Paragraph 1- Hyper-theme	The majority of migration still occurs among neighbouring nations in the poorer parts of the world and is mainly due to wars that lead to massive displacements of people who seek protection across borders	Use of logical links (here a verb: to be due to)= motives
2. Body Paragraph 2_ Hyper-theme	The effects of migration on people and communities are as varied as the reasons for leaving one's country	Use of general nouns (here a synonym of the general noun used in the introduction/scope) to announce the topic of the paragraph and to refer back to the previous paragraph.
4.Conclusion	This book aims to provide an up-to-date overview of these many facets of human migration.	Referencing word General noun (referring back to motives and impacts)

An uninformed reader may not notice these features. Lecturers in the disciplines may not notice them either, because this is outside their area of expertise. However, when these features are NOT present in writing, a reader (and a lecturer) will notice and often will experience this as a **lack of cohesion or flow**.

2. Using Tool Kit #1: Linguistic features that are useful in macro-themes

Macro-themes (thesis statements) are usually a precise answer to the question raised in the 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 answers the prompt explicitly (see the notes in the Essay Process handout regarding 'a working thesis'). In the case of your problem/solution essay, the macro-theme must state the specific problem you are discussing. In this tutorial, it is enough for you to specify the problem. In the next tutorial you will write a full introduction for your essay.

3. Using Tool Kit #1: Linguistic features that are useful in hyper-themes are:

- **Referencing words** (these, this, such + noun)
- **General nouns** (way, notion, idea, concept, variations, possibilities, occurrence, argument, reasons, point, issues, impact, factors, facets…). General words are words which summarize previous concepts in the text (in which case they occur with a demonstrative pronoun like 'this' or 'these', or the definite article 'the') and/or which 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/sentence is used as the THEME in this sentence (more about this below)

Task 3: These features are used in combination. How many of the features/strategies above can you find in the sentence below?

Beyond these environmental impacts, further consequences of the policy have been noted on the local economy.

Task 4: Study the text below. Find the macro-theme and the hyper-themes. Identify and analyse the linguistic features which effectively impact the structure the text.

Prompt: Niche Tourism has become very popular with tourists going on specific trips to experience a countries' culinary delights, to learn about its dark history, to learn a skill, or even to undergo surgical procedures. Discuss one type of niche tourism in a specific country to highlight the negative impact it has. Evaluate the current solutions in place (if any) and suggest improved ways to address the issue.

Sample essay (note: this is not a 'perfect' essay but provides a good sample to learn from)

(1) 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.

(2) Invasive species are foreign organisms that cause ecological harm to the habitat by jeopardizing the natural resources in the ecosystem and threatening the ecological sustainability (Tapper & Waedt, 2006). Mbaiwa (2005) demonstrates that the most devastating invasive species in Okavango Delta, which is mostly carried by the tourists, is a small floating fern called Salvania molesta, known as the Kariba weed. This weed has small rhizomes which can easily proliferate under water and impenetrable leaves that impede the sunlight to reach the underwater plants. As a result, Kariba weed obstructs the water plants' photosynthesis system, resulting in the decreasing amount of oxygen in the water. This, according to Mbaiwa, causes a severe damage to the water ecosystem as the aquatic flora and fauna is reduced due to insufficient oxygen. This damage on plant life has further consequence on both the ecosystem and human life. By reducing the amount of water plants, the Kariba weed also interferes with animal life and the local communities that depend on the Okavango River. The contamination from Kariba weed is affecting the food chain and leading to the extinction of water animals such as fish (Mbaiwa, 2005). This, in turn, has become a major problem for the local people who are mostly fisher folk. As Davis (2011) warns, the number of fishes that are caught is decreasing by 7% annually, thus, the existence of local people' livelihood is in distress.

(3) Indigenous to South America, this fern has spread through the Okavango Delta by water, animals, and more importantly, by boats. Forno (1992) confirms that the main modes of contamination are boats and other water transportation that are notably used for tourism and sight-seeing. Statistical data shows that the number of tourists boats has increased by 35% in the last decade and is three time higher than local fishermen's boats Davis (2011). The waterway that connects South Africa and the Okavango Delta, the Zambesi River, is often occupied by tourists' boats and is the place where most of the Kariba Weed comes from (Mbaiwa, 2009). As more tourists travel, the contaminated boats, carrying the fern spores on their hull, travel further away into the far reaches of the delta, spreading the weeds and increasing the dissemination scope of the Kariba weed. This shows that tourism plays a far more significant role in introducing this invasive species than the local activities.

(4) The government has taken steps to address this ecological and economic disaster by implementing a biological measure which consists of introducing Cyrtobagouss salviniae to reduce the Kariba weed's population. A Unesco report (2014) explains that the Cyrtobaguss salviniae, known as the weevil, is an insect that eats Kariba weed and breeds on it by laying its eggs under the leaves. After the eggs are hatched, the larvas invest the rhizomes to make their nest. This impedes the rhizomes from proliferating and decreases the population. However, Mbaiwa (2002) demonstrates that this biological measure is problematic. Firstly, it has been an expensive measure as weevil is indigenously from South America and is transported at high cost. More importantly, the effectiveness is questionable. Indeed, Kariba weed is still found

covering many isolated areas in the Delta, suggesting that it can only partially address the problem (Mbaiwa, 2009).

(5) In order to eradicate invasive species completely, the current current biological measure should be complemented with mechanical and chemical measures along with appropriate disposal methods (Mattrick, 2015). The implementation of mechanical measures involves cutting, pulling, and suffocating (a method that can eradicate everything beneath a thick UV-stabilized plastic sheeting) and can be applied anywhere including in isolated areas. This constitutes a great potential for the Okavanga delta Case and could be implemented in faraway locations where the Kariba weed still strives. However as Mattrick (2015) explains, when mechanical measures do not kill all high resistance invasive species, chemical measures can be used through foliar applications of herbicide Research shows that in situations involving invasive species, much attention must be given to disposal procedure (Davis, 2011). Improper disposal methods may lead to new investment in the existing area as the weeds' spores can regenerate easily. Seeing that Kariba weed can sprout vigorously, this weed should be dried or burned in prior to any disposal action. Adopting the complementing measure of mechanical and chemical treatment of the Kariba weed, and implementing draconian disclosure methods would significantly reduce any potential for living spores to proliferate, leading to a likely decrease in the weed over a short time. While the solution may involve significant expense from the local government, the overall result would protect future tourism and fishing industry. However, as Mbaiwe shows, this eradication of the Kariba weed would need to be supported by strict regulations on the tourism industry (Mbaiwe, 2005, 2009).

(6) This essay has described the harmful contamination of the Okavango Delta by the wildlife tourism industry that has accelerated the spread of the Kariba weed. As the ecosystem became damaged, so did the local communities prosperity which is based on the fish that lives in the delta's waters. The current solution which involves the introduction of a population controller has seen mixed response. Indeed, despite some degree of success of this method in decreasing Kariba weed, a thorough analysis by Mbaiwa (2005, 2009) was shown to lack long-term effectiveness. While the solution also lies in addressing the tourism industry itself to stop the source of the weed propagation (Mbaiwa, 2015; Unesco, 2014), this essay has focused on measures to decrease the weed impact, as a first step. This measure that encompasses mechanical and chemical solutions as well as safe disposal presents, it has been argued, a better potential to solve the problem durably.

no referencing in conclusion!!!

Reference list

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Task 5: Applying these strategies to your writing

Last week you analysed the prompt for the essay you will write and brainstormed ideas for a working thesis. You may also have started to organize your arguments/ideas into sections. Look at the ideas and sources you have gathered for your problem/solution essay and work on an outline. Write a more specific draft for the hyper themes:

Thesis statement/macro-theme:

  Hyper-Theme:

  Hyper-Theme:

  Hyper-Theme:

  Hyper-Theme:

Conclusion/Macro new:

4. Using Tool Kit #1: Cohesion at the paragraph level

Cohesion at the paragraph level means that your argument flows well from one sentence to the next. There are no gaps leaving the reader confused as to what you are trying to convey. The toolkit for this consists of the following resources:

- **Theme choice and thematic progression**: this ensures that the ideas and concepts are picked up in subsequent parts of the texts and that the start of each sentence is referring to or connected to something prior in the text.
- **Lexical cohesion**: creating lexical chains to refer to the same concept throughout the text
- **Conjunctions/linkers**: this ensures that the logical relations between ideas (cause, comparison, effect...) are clearly shown to the reader.
- **Referencing words**: Concepts can be picked up again without repeating the same word (this is also part of the lexical chains)
- **General nouns:** See description above. These are very common in hyper-themes but also in paragraph development.

> . Task 6: Read through the thematic progression pages on the Sydney Write Site to find out more about the three main thematic progression patterns
> (http://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m3/m3u5/m3u5s3/m3u5s3_1.htm)

a) **What do we mean by *Theme*?** The **theme** refers to the beginning of the sentence (the segment before the main verb), it tells the reader the topic of the sentence.

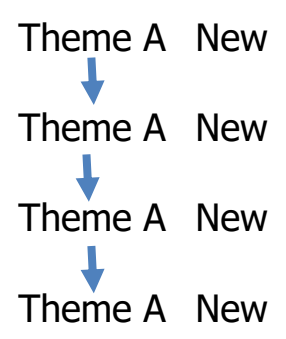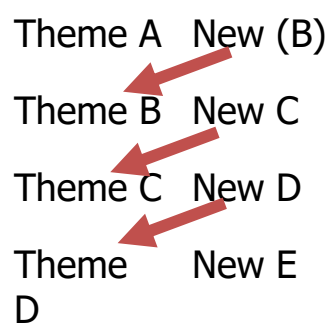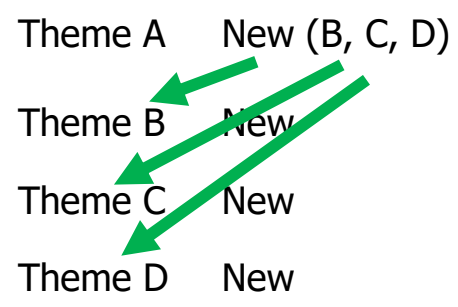| Examples: |
|---|
| • **The issue** *is racial discrimination.* (The issue is the theme) |
| • **The most pressing issue with the newly implemented policy** *is racial discrimination.* (A longer theme) |

b) **What is meant by NEW?** The *rest of the sentence* is the new information you are communicating about the theme (in italics above).

So, in English, a sentence tells you something (NEW) about something (theme).

"Theme and New are important in writing cohesively because the information they contain is picked up and repeated through the text. Once you understand Theme and New, you can use these components to create continuity and smooth the flow of your writing." (from the writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au)

Themes can be repeated through a range of ways: you can use a synonym, a general noun, or a pronoun (but make sure that the reference is clear to the reader).

c) **What is Thematic Progression?** This refers to the ways themes pick up information that is already in the text. This weaving creates what is called 'flow'. The problem novice (and experienced) writers face is that the way the information connects and links is clear to them only, but is not visible to the readers. In ES1103 we often remind you that your reader cannot read your mind to see all the research, analysis of concepts and connections you have made, the reader only has your text to understand fully what you mean. When your thematic progression is not well managed, your reader will experience 'gaps' in your texts, when she/he will be asking "why is this brought up now? Where's this coming from? You probably have experienced this as a reader.

Pattern 1: linear	Pattern 2: zigzag	Pattern 3: Fan
Theme A New ↓ Theme A New ↓ Theme A New ↓ Theme A New	Theme A New (B) Theme B New C Theme C New D Theme D New E	Theme A New (B, C, D) Theme B New Theme C New Theme D New

Why is this important?

Knowing that in fact 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). You also know that hyper themes often make use of the pattern 3: Fan because this allows you to present a wide concept (often expressed through a general noun) and to break it down, develop it in the paragraph. Pattern 1 is very common when you are defining a concept.

You can now check your paragraphs for gaps in the thematic progression (especially when a lecturer writes 'poor flow' or 'poor cohesion' in the margin of your assignments, as often this is the weakness that is commented on).

> **Task 7: Thematic progression:** Identify and highlight the themes in the following paragraph. Discuss what pattern is used and why the writer might have chosen this pattern.

(1) 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.

This writer has used the three patterns in this introduction, to focus and shift the reader's attention on specific items. The reader is never confused about the development of the text. The end of the introduction uses a New that announces the themes that will be used for each paragraph (which gives the Fan pattern at the whole text level).

The following tasks will help you understand see the difference thematic progression makes in helping a reader follow your text.

Task 8: Guided Analysis

Complete the task below on the Sydney University Write Site. Decide which of the two texts is more cohesive and analyse the thematic progression to see the role it plays:

https://writesite.elearn.usyd.edu.au/m3/m3u5/m3u5s3/m3u5s3_13.htm

For the paragraph above, find the following:

- Lexical chains
- Referencing pronouns
- General nouns
- Conjunctions/linkers

. Task 9: Independent Text analysis

1. In groups, you will be assigned ONE paragraph from this lesson's text.
2. Analyse your paragraph for the use of
   - Lexical chains
   - Nominalization* (**verbs or adjectives** -> nouns).
       "*Researchers immediately **analysed** the results. This analysis revealed that X is an unstable compound.*"
   - Referencing pronouns
   - General nouns
   - Conjunctions/linkers
   - Thematic Progression
3. Present your findings to the rest of the class - The focus is not on right or wrong, but on looking at and making hypothesis about the choices made by the writer to convey meaning.

(More will be explained about nominalization in future lessons.)

| To create texts that flow logically and that are easy for a reader to follow (coherence and cohesion) | **Tool Kit #1: Textual cohesion**
Macrotheme (Thesis statement)
Hyper-themes (Topic Sentences)
• General nouns problems, causes effect, impact, reasons, issue…
• Nominalisation
• Referencing pronouns and other words) shopping centres→ they→ such places
• Conjunction/linkers however, as a result, Beyond…
Thematic progression (information flow)
A-B. B-C   A- B. A-C   A-B.B1-C.B2-D

Cohesion at paragraph level :
• 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.** | Write examples here |

Preparation for next tutorial:

1. Carry on gathering sources, and working on your essay outline.
2. Read the notes on 'Writing an introduction'.

Picture of weaving loom taken from http://possumjimandelizabeth.com/xhtml/craft_weaving.html