THE UNIVERSITY OF DANANG
UNIVERSITY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDIES

LÊ THỊ ANH TUYỄN

A STUDY OF COHESIVE DEVICES
IN IELTS LISTENING TASKS

Major: ENGLISH LINGUISTICS
Code: 822 02 01

MASTER THESIS IN
LINGUISTICS AND CULTURAL STUDIES
OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES
(A SUMMARY)

Da Nang, 2019
This thesis has been completed at
University of Foreign Language Studies, The University of Da Nang

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyễn Thị Quỳnh Hoa

Examiner 1: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nguyễn Tất Thắng

Examiner 2: Dr. Phan Văn Hòa

The thesis will be orally defended at the Examining Committee
Time: June 7, 2019
Venue: University of Foreign Language Studies – The University of Da Nang

This thesis is available for the purpose of reference at:
- The Center for Learning Information Resources and Communication – The University of Da Nang.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1. RATIONALE

As English has continued to expand its influence as the international language, it has become more and more necessary for those who wish to take advantage of educational, business or immigration opportunities to be competent in English and, to be able to demonstrate this competence by means of results in examinations such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System). IELTS is a test of all four language skills: reading, listening, writing and speaking. Of all four skills, listening skill has been a matter of great concern for English language learners due to the failure to grasp main ideas and follow the flow of information. One suggested strategy to deal with this problem is recognizing the cohesive devices in the listening texts. However, the relationship between cohesive devices with listening comprehension in general and in IELTS Listening Tasks in particular has not been extensively explored.

For this reason, I would like to conduct a study of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks for my master thesis with a view to helping learners of English language in general and IELTS test takers improve their listening skill.

1.2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

1.2.1. Aims

The study is aimed to identify cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks and illuminate their linguistic features, then suggest ways to help improve English language learners’ listening competence.

1.2.2. Objectives
- identifying various types of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks.
- describing the syntactic and semantic features of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks.

**1.3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**
- What are common types of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks?
- What are syntactic features of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks?
- What are semantic features of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks?

**1.4. SCOPE OF STUDY**
The data for this study are confined to Listening Part 4 involving a monologue academic lecture or speech of IELTS Listening Tasks, which were taken from selected IELTS Test Books published by prestigious publishers from 2008 to 2018.

**1.5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**
The study is conducted with the hope to help English language learners improve their listening skill. Also, for those who want to demonstrate their English competence by means of IELTS result, insights from this study could help them to be well-prepared for the listening module, thereby increasing their chances of success in actual IELTS Tests.

**1.6. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY**
- Chapter One: Introduction
- Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Background
- Chapter Three: Research Methodology
- Chapter Four: Findings and Discussions
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Up to now, there have been numerous researches into the important role of cohesive devices in comprehension skill.

In “The Context of Language Teaching”, Richards (1985) regarded cohesive devices as an important factor influencing the work listeners must do to process speech. He claimed that speech shares with written discourse the grammatical mechanism in terms of ties within and between sentences. Furthermore, Brown (1999) stated that cohesive devices such as transitional words and phrases signal the meaningful relationships between ideas in the text; therefore, aid the text comprehension. His view was in line with Spooren(2001)’s when he pointed out the use of explicit cohesive devices or linking phrases as one way of signaling cohesive relations in language texts.

In the study on “Listening Comprehension in Academic Lectures: a Focus on the Role of Discourse Markers”, Smit (2006) claimed that in order to have a coherent interpretation of a lecture, an active listener needs to pay attention to linguistic devices that signal structural changes in the organization of the text and indicate when a new direction is taken or when the speaker returns to a previous topic.

2.2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.2.1. IELTS

IELTS stands for International English Language Testing System. It is the world’s leading English language proficiency test.
IELTS test is designed to assess learners’ ability in English in all four skills—Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing.

2.2.2. IELTS Listening Tests

Table 2.1: Structure of an IELTS Listening Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Topic area</th>
<th>Input</th>
<th>Main skill focus</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Social /academic setting</td>
<td>Usually a conversation between two people. Sometimes a third person might be involved or introduced to the conversation. E.g: finding out information about an English course</td>
<td>Listening for specific information</td>
<td>About 4 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Social/academic setting</td>
<td>Usually a monologue of a social/functional nature. E.g: a tour guide giving instructions or directions</td>
<td>Listening for specific information</td>
<td>About 3-4 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Academic setting</td>
<td>Usually a conversation between two to four people. E.g: a dialogue between 2 students about an assignment</td>
<td>Listening for specific information, attitudes and opinions of speakers</td>
<td>About 4 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Among the above four IELTS listening sections, Section 4 is the focus of the thesis because it is a monologue in the academic context. Specifically, English language learners listen to a person giving a lecture or a talk in order to grasp factual information, attitudes and speakers’ opinions.

2.2.3. Cohesion

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is a network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations which link various parts of a text. It refers to the range of possibilities that exist for linking one sentence and among other things with the other that has gone before or previously mentioned. Cohesion could be expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary. Therefore, cohesion could refer to grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion.

2.2.4. Cohesive Devices

In this research, cohesive devices are defined as single words...
or phrases that basically make the text connected. In communication, cohesive devices are essential as they help the speakers and/or the listeners to understand the relationship between different sentences or between various parts of speech.

In this study, the typology and taxonomy proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) will be adopted because it is by far the most popular in the field of text linguistics. Cohesive devices are categorized into two types: grammatical cohesive devices and lexical cohesive devices.

**a. Lexical Cohesive Devices**

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), lexical cohesion is “phoric” relation which is established through the structure of vocabulary. Lexical cohesion occurs when two words in a text are related in terms of their meaning. Reiteration and collocation are the two major types of lexical cohesion. Reiteration consists of repetition, synonym or near-synonym, hyponymy (specific-general), and antonymy.

**b. Grammatical Cohesive Devices**

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), grammatical cohesion refers to the employment of grammatical means in order to establish relations within a discourse. It is categorized into four types, namely reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction.

**2.2.5. Syntactic Features of Cohesive Devices**

The study of how words are combined together to form phrases and sentences is referred to as syntax. Radford (1997) opines that syntax studied the level of language that lies between words and meaning of utterance; that is, sentence structure. In this research,
syntactic roles of cohesive devices were identified within clause structure proposed by Quirk (1985).

### 2.2.6. Semantic Features of Cohesive Devices

**Table 2.2: Semantic and lexicogrammatical cohesion in English texts**

(Halliday, M. A. K.; & Hasan, R., 1976)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Representation in Linguistic System</th>
<th>Types of Cohesive Devices</th>
<th>Semantic Relation</th>
<th>Lexicogrammatical (typically)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conjunction</strong></td>
<td>Additive, adversative, causal and temporal relations, external and internal</td>
<td>Discourse adjunctive a: adverbial groups, prepositional groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reference</strong></td>
<td>Identification - by speech role - by proximity - by specificity (only) Reference point</td>
<td>Personals Demonstratives Definite Articles Comparatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lexical cohesion</strong></td>
<td>Collocation (similarity of lexical environment) Reiteration (identity of lexical</td>
<td>Same or associated lexical item Same lexical item: synonym Super ordinate: general word</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Substitution | Identity of potential reference (class meaning) in context of non-identity of actual (instantial) reference | Verbal, nominal or clausal substitute
| Verbal, nominal or clausal ellipsis |

2.3. SUMMARY

Literature in cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks is regarded as a vital source of background information for learners and teachers of English language to discover cohesive devices. As the aim of the study is to explore syntactic and semantic features of cohesive devices commonly used in IELTS Listening Tasks, syntactic framework proposed by Quirk (1985) and semantic features by Halliday and Hasan (1976) were analyzed in this chapter. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is the grammatical and lexical links within a text or sentence that hold a text together and gives it meaning. Syntactic features of cohesive devices can be realized through their semantic roles in a sentence as a subject, an object, a verb, a complement or an adverbial based on syntactic framework of Quirk (1985).

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches.

3.2. RESEARCH METHODS
In this research, the descriptive method was mainly employed to give a detailed description of cohesive devices used in IELTS Listening Tasks.

3.3. SAMPLING

The samples are cohesive devices withdrawn from tapescripts of section 4 in IELTS Listening Tasks of IELTS Test Books officially published by Cambridge University Press, McGraw ESL/EFT, Macmillan Education, Longman and British Council and IDP: IELTS Australia from 2008 to 2018. The samples are identified based on the working definition of cohesive devices presented in this thesis: Cohesive devices are single words or phrases that basically make the text connected. These expressions show semantic relations between an element in a text and other elements crucial for interpretation of the text.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION

To conduct the research, 548 cohesive devices were withdrawn from 92 tapescripts of IELTS Listening Section Four in IELTS Listening Tasks. All of these samples were collected from 20 different updated IELTS Test Books.

3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

- Identifying the cohesive devices in the tapescripts of IELTS Listening Tasks.
- Categorizing types of cohesive devices in these tapescripts of IELTS Listening Tasks.

3.6. RESEARCH PROCEDURES

- Reviewing relevant materials to write the theoretical background for this study.
- Collecting data from different material sources of IELTS Listening Tasks.
- Analyzing the collected data to identify common types of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks.
- Discussing the finding results to find out syntactic and semantic features of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks.
- Drawing conclusions and suggesting implications for teachers and learners of English language.

3.7. RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

With respect to reliability, tapescripts used for analysis were taken from IELTS Listening Tasks, which were officially released by world-famous publishers such as Cambridge University Press and Macmillan. Therefore, the credibility of analyzed samples is assured.

In terms of validity, as samples were collected from the authentic sources and updated IELTS Listening Tasks (from 2008 to 2018), they can be representative. Also, the study was carried out following the reviewed theoretical background to ensure the quality of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. COMMON COHESIVE DEVICES USED IN IELTS LISTENING TASKS

4.1.1. Grammatical Cohesive Devices

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), grammatical cohesive devices are divided into four kinds, namely reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction.

a. Reference

- Personal reference
“Now, let’s consider two types of mistake that can occur when a manager actually starts to set up a duplicate system to replicate a successful process. Firstly, perhaps he forgets that he was just trying to copy another process, and starts trying to improve on it.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2009, p.144)

- **Demonstrative reference**
  “For example, we know from the Dynamic paintings that over 8,000 years ago, Aborigines would have rarely eaten fish and sea levels were much lower at this time.”


- **Comparative Reference**
  “The goal, then, is to utilize existing knowledge and not to generate knowledge. It’s a less glamorous activity than pure innovation, but it actually happens more often.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2010, p.145)

**b. Substitution**

“On eight occasions, a bird’s first contact was by using a tool. In all three trials, Barney began by using a stick for inspection. One involved a rubber snake.”

(Cullen, P., French, A., & Jakeman, V., 2014, p.364)

**c. Ellipsis**

“In those days it was very difficult to send records from one part of the world to another ( ) so it wasn’t possible for them to share their information until the electric telegraph became more widespread.”

(Thomas, B., & Hashemi, L., 2011, p. 200)

**d. Conjunction**
- **Additive conjunction**
“There were many midland trades, some of them indigenous, some of them not. For example, there were immigrants from France who came as early as the late sixteenth century and they were producers of glass.”

(Mann, M., & Taylor-Knowles, S., 2009, p. 207)

• **Adversative conjunction**

  “Next there’s the old problem with chewing gum. Everyone knows that after a few minutes’ chewing it loses its minty flavor. However, if you ask people to chew up to the point where it becomes tasteless, and then ask them to eat a little sugar and continue chewing, to most people’s surprise, what happens is that the original mintiness actually returns because it is the sweetness which is needed to make the mintiness perceptible.”

(Mann, M., & Taylor-Knowles, S., 2009, p. 200)

• **Causal conjunction**

  “And one of the first-year students I interviewed wanted reassurance that no names would be traceable from the answers. I was so surprised, because they think nothing of telling you about themselves and their opinions in seminar groups.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2013, p.140)

• **Temporal conjunction**

  “These involve adjusting attitudes, first of all... being more realistic and cautious really. Secondly, they involve exerting strict controls on the organizational and operational systems.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2013, p.145)

4.1.2. Lexical Cohesive Devices

Lexical cohesion is established through the structure of lexis or vocabulary. Lexical cohesion is categorized into two major types.
a. Reiteration

• Repetition

“Now, the second gallery I’d like to talk about is Tate St. Ives, which is in Cornwall. It was built on the site of a gasworks and it overlooks Porthme or Beach. Tate St. Ives is housed in a three-story building that was designed by the architects Evans and Shaleff.”

(Mann, M., & Taylor-Knowles, S., 2009, p. 112)

• Synonymy

“Many toxins, as I’m quite sure you are aware, originate from plants or animals. The whales ingest these toxins in its normal feeding behavior but whether these poisons directly or indirectly lead to stranding and death seems to depend upon the toxin involved.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2014, p.135)

• Antonymy

“Now one of the major benefits of this culture is that it’s flexible. But it does have some major disadvantages too.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2014, p.140)

• Hyponymy

“When you look at international restaurant menus and supermarkets, they all tend to feature the same range of meats – beef, lamb, chicken, pork, that sort of thing. But people are always interested in something different and we’re now finding that farming can bring new types of meat to our tables. The kangaroo is now being farmed for its meat and eaten outside Australia, where it comes from.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2008a, p.154)
b. Collocation

“Today, I’d like to introduce Ted Hunter, who used to rear sheep and poultry but who is here to tell us about a rather unusual type of livestock that he’s been concentrating on in the last few years. Ted Hunter is a member of the Domesticated Ostrich Farming Association, and is here to tell us about possibilities of breeding and rearing these birds here in this country.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2017, p.146)

4.2. SYNTACTIC FEATURES OF COHESIVE DEVICES IN IELTS LISTENING TASKS

4.2.1. Syntactic roles of cohesive devices

a. Syntactic roles of grammatical cohesive devices

• Subject

“Next, there’s a further instance, this time in the water and it’s come from Japan. It’s a delicious but very fast-spreading seaweed and is one of many exotic species, large and small, in the seas covering the rocks around Australia.”

(Thomas, B., & Hashemi, L., 2011, p. 185)

• Object

“Trees need water to grow. They also need some sunlight to grow and you need room to put them. If you have the chance of knocking buildings down and replacing them, then suddenly you can start looking at different ways to design the streets and to introduce...”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2009, p.135)

• Adverbial

“If I could start by briefly explaining what steps were taken to find out student opinion and how we have arrived at conclusions.
Firstly, a meeting was held in the current Union for our SU Committee to explain the options. Then we invited all students to submit written suggestions for the design, placing cards in a suggestion box. These suggestions then provided the basis for the design of a questionnaire, which was completed by approximately two thousand of the College students over a period of three weeks. Finally, the SU Committee collated the results and drew up a report.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2009, p.144)

b. Syntactic roles of lexical cohesive devices

- **Subject**

  “Tate Britain was the first of the four Tate galleries in to open and it was established in 1897. During its lifetime, Tate Britain has been damaged twice: once by flood waters from the River Thames, and once by bombings during World War II.”

  (Thomas, B., & Hashemi, L., 2011, p. 112)

- **Object**

  “Now the way she’s carrying out this research is worth thinking about. She’s using a mixture of studies using birds kept in laboratories, and studies carried out outdoors in the wild.

  (Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2017, p.109)

- **Verb**

  “We need to create corridors for migration, so they can get from one area to another safety. As well as this, action needs to be taken to lower the levels of fishing quotas to prevent overfishing of endangered species.”

  (Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2017, p.114)
• Complement

“There are two more points to do with corporate crime that I’d like to illustrate with reference to a specific event which occurred several years ago. This was an explosion of a large oil tanker which caused the loss of more than fifty lives of the crew. It was an explosion which never should have happened.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2009, p.140)

4.3. SEMANTIC FEATURES OF COHESIVE DEVICES IN IELTS LISTENING TASKS

4.3.1. Semantic features of Grammatical Cohesive Devices in IELTS Listening Tasks

a. Deixis

In IELTS Listening Tasks, deictic terms help the listener to identify the referent of a referring expression through its spatial or temporal relationship with the situation of utterance

“The main source of energy that most of them use is still coal, and when it’s burned it releases mercury into the atmosphere.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2017, p.109)

“A much more serious case, also in Scotland, as well as other countries, along with the latest victim, Iceland, is the New Zealand flatworm. It is a most unwelcome newcomer in these regions of north-west Europe.

(Thomas, B., & Hashemi, L., 2011, p. 185)

b. Conjunction

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), conjunction marks the relation between what is to follow and what has been done before. Generally, conjunction involves four semantic functions.
- **Additive relation**
  
  “In the display you will notice samples of work on book cover design, and as well as having all the necessary computer programmes for dealing with printing we have some old printing presses.”

  (McCarter, S., 2008, p.162)

- **Adversative relation**
  
  “When meshing began, approximately fifteen hundred sharks were caught in the first year. However, this declined in the years that followed, and since that time, the average annual catch has been only about a hundred and fifty a year.”

  (Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2010, p.151)

- **Causal relation**
  
  “Ten years later, in 1949, systematic meshing was extended to include the beaches to the south of Sydney. As a result of the general success of the program in Sydney, shark – meshing was introduced to the state of Queensland around 1970.”

  (Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2009, p.151)

- **Temporal relation**
  
  “First in this seminar, I’m going to give a brief introduction to contemporary research on rock art. Second, I’m going to give you some do’s and don’ts for our fieldwork trip in April – so please listen very carefully.

  (Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2012, p.134)

4.3.2. Semantic Features of Lexical Cohesive Devices in IELTS Listening Tasks

  **a. Similarity of lexical environment**
  
  Lexical environment denotes a segment of reality symbolized
by a set of related words. The words in a semantic environment share a common semantic property. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), collocation is considered as the cohesive effect of pairs of words which depend not so much on many systematic relationships as on their tendency to share the same lexical environment, to occur in collocation with one another.

“Now – What about the design of the slides for your laptop? Well the important thing here is to be consistent. You need to have the same type of font and use the same color and size for the same elements. For example, all headers need to look the same, all bullet points need to be presented in the same way. And don’t just stick to words. Bring the presentation to life by adding graphics.”


b. Identity of lexical reference

As stated by Halliday and Hasan (1976), in terms of identity of lexical reference, lexical cohesion is manifested in three ways: repetition, super-ordinate/ hyponymy, synonymy and near synonymy.

“There are several reasons for this lack of interest in corporate crime, compared with other types of crime. It’s very complex, whereas with conventional crime it’s usually possible to follow what’s going on without specialist knowledge. As well as this, whereas conventional crime usually has a lot of human interest, corporate crime often has much less.”

(Jakeman, V., & McDowell, C., 2009, p.139)

4.4. SUMMARY

Below are the diagrams illustrating common types of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Task and their frequency of occurrence.
Figure 4.7: Common types of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks

- Lexical Cohesive Devices
  - Reiteration
  - Collocation
  - Synonymy
  - Hyponymy
  - Antonymy

- Grammatical Cohesive Devices
  - Reference
    - Personal
    - Demonstrative
    - Comparative
  - Substitution
    - Nominal
    - Verbal
    - Clausal
  - Ellipsis
    - Nominal
    - Verbal
    - Clausal
  - Conjunction
    - Additive
    - Adversative
    - Causal
    - Temporal

Figure 4.8: Frequency of Subtypes of Cohesive Devices in IELTS Listening Tasks

- 35.95% Lexical Cohesive Devices
- 64.05% Grammatical Cohesive Devices
Table 4.9: Syntactic Roles and Semantic Features of Cohesive Devices in IELTS Listening Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Cohesive Devices</th>
<th>Syntactic Roles</th>
<th>Semantic Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammatical Cohesive Devices</td>
<td>Subject/ Object/ Adverbial</td>
<td>- Deixis (personal /spatial/ temporal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Conjunction (additive/ adversative/ causal/ temporal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lexical Cohesive Devices</td>
<td>Subject/ Verb/ Object/ Complement</td>
<td>- Similarity of lexical environment (collocation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Identity of lexical reference (repetition, super-ordinate/ hyponymy, synonymy and near synonymy)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. CONCLUSIONS

The study is conducted to find out how cohesive devices are often used in IELTS Listening Tasks – Section Four and how they support listening comprehension of the listeners to get the main points of the speech. The analysis of collected data shows the results about frequently used cohesive devices as well as their syntactic and semantic features.

Through the process of findings and discussions in Chapter Four, it can be concluded that cohesive devices in IELTS Listening
Tasks are categorized into two types: lexical cohesive devices and grammatical cohesive devices with the former being slightly less commonly - used than the latter; however, both play an equally important role in making the talk cohesive and coherent. More specifically, grammatical cohesive devices consist of four subtypes: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, among which reference and conjunction are the two most frequently used. As for lexical cohesive devices, their five common subtypes are repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, antonymy and collocation with repetition and collocation ranking first in occurrence.

Syntactically, cohesive devices were identified by their syntactic roles in a sentence. Grammatical cohesive devices primarily serve the role of subject, object, and adverbial. Meanwhile, the syntactic roles of lexical cohesive devices are subject, object, verb and complement.

Semantically, cohesive devices are analyzed based on lexicogrammatical system proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Grammatical cohesive devices show semantic relation according to deixis (personal, spatial and temporal) and conjunction relation (additive, adversative, causal and temporal). Semantic relation of lexical cohesive devices is created through similarity of lexical environment (collocation) and identity of lexical reference (repetition, super-ordinate/ hyponymy, synonymy and near synonymy). The use of grammatical cohesive devices creates a unified network of meanings by avoiding repetition, maintaining communication sequence, integrating information and enriching the semantic texture; meanwhile, lexical cohesive devices are necessary to elaborate the main theme of the talk and create unified meaning.
Generally, there is high frequency level of occurrence of cohesive devices in section four of IELTS Listening Tasks. Diversification of subtypes of cohesive devices in the talk helps link the ideas cohesively, therefore, the listeners can catch up with the flow of information and grasp the gist of the talk.

5.2. IMPLICATIONS

As investigated, cohesive devices play an important role in creating semantic unity in the flow of information in the talk. Therefore, cohesive relations of language which are very essential for listening comprehension should be taken into account in teaching and learning process. Some implications for English language teachers, students and especially IELTS test-takers will be suggested as follows.

As listening skill is challenging to most students, teachers should play a role of a facilitator to guide them in listening activities at class. Specifically, to help students develop effective listening, teachers had better introduce them necessary strategies to cope with each distinctive task type. For example, when students are going to complete section four in IELTS Listening Tasks, they often deal with Note Completion Task, it is essential for in-charge-teachers to remind them of techniques to deal with this task type. In addition, teachers have a crucial role in assisting students to surmount their difficulties in comprehending spoken speech. This help can take the form of developing learners’ listening strategies. The pre-listening stage in their lesson as it is extremely challenging for students to listen without any idea of what is expected to hear. Therefore, teachers ought to give them time to read instructions and questions carefully so that they can figure out the speech’s content. Before listening to
the listening text in Section four of IELTS Listening Tasks, learners must read through and underline the key words, which will help students to listen selectively for a purpose to avoid the feeling of being overloaded with the flow of incoming information. Also, they can know which point of the listening text should be picked up or ignored in order that understanding the main topic is not affected. Therefore, recognizing the cohesive devices in the talk is an effective problem-solving solution to general listening comprehension. Based on cohesive devices, listeners can find out the main focus of the speakers and their purpose when introducing information. More importantly, listeners will be less likely to be lost if they can catch up with temporal conjunction such as “firstly”, “next”, “finally” because these words signal where the speakers are in the flow of information. Besides, while doing listening tasks, listeners should know how to choose suitable listening strategies to assist their comprehension. When having problems with new words, instead of spending much time on thinking of their meaning, listeners must ignore them and keep listening to incoming information. In these cases, listening to collocation words, synonyms and antonyms which appear in the sequence of sentences in the listening text can help them guess the context.

In teaching IELTS Listening, besides official IELTS Listening Tests, teachers need to select a wide range of extra materials with academic content to support students’ learning as students should be exposed to different listening experiences and texts including stories, descriptive talks in the academic setting. Teachers also choose listening materials from the Internet, radio with interesting and familiar topics so that students can relate what they are doing in the
listening lesson to the real life and build up vocabulary of diverse sectors. When correcting the answers, the teachers should analyze the application of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks and guide students to recognize cohesive devices in the listening text. Such cohesion will offer listeners clues to guess the answers.

5.3. LIMITATIONS

The current study has elicited information relevant to the research questions. However, because of time constraints and the lack of linguistic knowledge, it certainly has some limitations. Firstly, the selected samples for analysis are restricted to twenty IELTS Testbooks. Secondly, the thesis only focuses on syntactic roles and semantic categories of cohesive devices; therefore, other aspects of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks cannot be fully revealed.

5.4. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focuses on discovering features of cohesive devices in IELTS Listening Tasks in terms of categories, syntactic roles and semantic features. Some suggestions for further research could be put forward as follows:

1. An investigation into Cohesive Devices in dialogues in IELTS Listening Tasks.

2. An investigation into the use of Cohesive Devices in IELTS Writing samples.