A SEMANTIC PROSODY ANALYSIS OF TWO ADJECTIVE SYNONYMOUS PAIRS (SECURE & STABLE AND VULNERABLE & SUSCEPTIBLE) IN COCA

BY

MISS WANWIPA CANTANURAK

AN INDEPENDENT STUDY PAPER SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING LANGUAGE INSTITUTE THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC YEAR 2016 COPYRIGHT OF THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY
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MISS WANWIPA CANTANURAK

ENTITLED
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was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language Teaching on May 24, 2017

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the semantic prosodies and the interchangeability of the two adjective synonymous pairs secure & stable and vulnerable & susceptible chosen from academic core word list in COCA. Obtaining the data from COCA corpus, this study found that secure & stable contain particularly positive semantic prosodies while vulnerable & susceptible are associated with negative semantic prosodies. Despite each pair’s similar denotational meanings, each pair shares different most co-occurred collocates, so they are considered to be only near synonyms and cannot be used interchangeably in all contexts.

Keywords: coca, corpus linguistics, synonymy, semantic prosody
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Thammasat University

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<tr>
<td>MA-ELT</td>
<td>Master of Arts Program in English</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Language Teaching</td>
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<td>IS</td>
<td>Independent Study</td>
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<td>COCA</td>
<td>Corpus of Contemporary American English</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Writing skills are a vital component of literacy; students need to be proficient writers in order to participate in our literate society (Rumsey, 1998). Students can improve their writing when they attain an expanded word bank. In order to write effectively, they should be aware of various synonyms and their collocations subject to syntactic modifications (Mukoroli, 2011). However, a word contains countless implications, connotations and attitudes in addition to its basic dictionary meaning. Thus, one must carefully choose and consider all options of the word’s usage to use it appropriately in a particular situation. (Savchenko, 2011). Moreover, although words may share the same meanings, it does not mean that the synonyms are interchangeable in all situations (Phoocharoensil, 2010).

In this study, I wish to explore the semantic prosodies of two adjective synonymous pairs: secure & stable and vulnerable & susceptible. In GAT (General Aptitude test, 2012) students were asked to look for synonyms of susceptible and vulnerable. Interestingly, these words are shown in COCA corpus data with a high frequency of their occurrence, meaning that they are highly used by native speakers. To elaborate, the frequencies of the target words (obtained from COCA corpus data) are shown as follows: secure (17,700 frequencies), stable (15,051 frequencies), vulnerable (14,014 frequencies) and susceptible (3,687 frequencies).

According to Chinnawong’s (1999 as cited in Hull et.al 2009:2) finding from a study of students’ ability in academic writing, after grammatical errors, students made the most mistakes with vocabulary (e.g. spelling and word choices). Learners tend to think all synonyms can be used interchangeably in all aspects (Chalong, 2014). Also, language learners tend to produce errors when it comes to choosing words using synonyms because normally they consult dictionaries or a thesaurus that mostly give only surface meanings and one or two examples (Punyasuth, 2014). Often terms have the same translation and are defined as similar terms in dictionaries, so Thai students may think that they can be used interchangeably in all contexts.
In the findings of Phoocharoensil (2010), it was stated that although words are similar in the core meaning, in reality, they may differ in terms of senses of meaning, connotations, collocations and grammatical patterns. Semantic prosodies will be applied in this study in order to examine the similarities and differences between the two target words in each pair in terms of senses of meaning, semantic preference, co-occurrence words and stylistic information in COCA. Semantic prosodies of the words will be highlighted by using corpus linguistics to look at their concordance lines and collocates used authentically by native speakers to analyze their semantic features.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study was to attempt to answer the following questions:

1.2.1 What groups of semantic features are these two adjective synonymous pairs associated with (positive, neutral, or negative) ?

1.2.2 Can these two adjective synonymous pairs (stable & secure and susceptible & vulnerable) be used interchangeably?

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1.3.1 To investigate the collocations of these two adjective synonymous pairs (stable & secure and susceptible & vulnerable) by using data obtained from COCA.

1.3.2 To investigate the semantic prosodies of the two adjective synonymous pairs (stable & secure and susceptible & vulnerable).

1.3.3 To investigate the interchangeability of the two adjective synonymous pairs (stable & secure and susceptible & vulnerable) when being used in writing.
1.4 DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1.4.1 COCA is the Corpus of Contemporary American English that is considered to be the largest corpus of American English, containing 450 million words from year 1990 to 2012 in various genres of texts, including academic, newspaper, magazine, fiction and spoken.

1.4.2 Synonym refers to a word or a phrase that has the same or nearly the same meaning as another in the language, such as little and small. (Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, 2016). In this study, the focused synonyms will be secure & stable and vulnerable & susceptible.

1.4.3 Collocation is an expression consisting of two or more words that correspond to some conventional way of saying things, for example, noun phrases like strong tea and bars of soap, or a phrasal verb like make up (Manning & Hinrich Schütze, 1999).

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study was limited to the investigation of the semantic prosodies of two adjective synonymous pairs, secure & stable and vulnerable & susceptible. The researcher selected the corpus-based data only from the academic genre in COCA to analyze the data because the results of this study will be beneficial for students who are usually familiar with academic texts, or required to compose scholarly articles or essays. They need to be aware of the difference of these two adjective synonymous pairs and use them correctly in various contexts. The data analysis was based on the 20 most frequent collocates within a span of 4 words to the right of the given adjective. 50 randomly chosen concordance lines were investigated to discover the semantic prosodies.
1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This section will provide a brief description of the significance of this study;

1.6.1 The findings of this study will reveal the collocations of the given synonymous adjective pairs so that learners will be able to distinguish the nuanced differences between the two adjective synonymous pairs, guiding them to use the appropriate synonym in context. As a result, they will know that the synonyms cannot be used interchangeably in every context.

1.6.2 This research will be beneficial for English language teachers and students who wish to utilize the Corpus of Contemporary American English to look up words for their naturally occurring concordance lines and application in authentic texts in various genres that dictionaries do not provide.

1.6.3 This study will help to develop ESL learners and teachers’ awareness that the study of semantic prosody needs to be incorporated into the vocabulary pedagogy as it gives insightful information about the words.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The rest of the study is organized in the following way:

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature that includes the theories of semantic prosodies, synonymy, collocates, corpus linguistics and relevant research associated with the objectives of this study. Chapter 3 contains the methodology used to examine and investigate the semantic prosodies of the two adjective synonymous pairs, including data collection and data analysis. As for Chapter 4, it deals with the results of this study from examining the concordance lines and their collocates. Lastly, Chapter 5 offers discussion of findings, the conclusion of the whole study in relationship with the research questions, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE  

2.1 INTRODUCTION  
In this chapter, reviews of the literature related to the study in five main areas are provided; in Section 2.2 semantics are discussed. Synonymy is discussed in depth in Section 2.3. Then, collocation is reviewed in Section 2.4 while corpus linguistics and its use are presented in Section 2.5. Finally, reviews of relevant studies are provided in Section 2.6.

2.2 SEMANTIC PROSODIES  
One difficulty that non-native English language learners may face is the semantic prosody within synonymous word pairs while composing academic texts. Hence, it is crucial for learners to be aware of the variation in the near synonyms by analyzing the semantic prosodies. Specifically, although two words may share similar cognitive or denotational meanings, they may have not only different collocational behavior but also distinct semantic prosodies (Hu, 2015). Thus, semantic prosody has been a focus of interest among corpus linguists over the last 15-20 years (Stewart, 2010).

Sinclair originally observed the environment of the phrasal verb set in and the verb happen by using a corpus of 7.3 million words, and found that many uses of words and phrases have a tendency to occur in a particular semantic environment. The two mentioned phrasal verbs were found to most frequently collocate with unpleasant things such as rot, decay, despair, bitterness, etc. (Stewart, 2010). To give more examples, when someone utters set in, a negative sense is expected.

In this way, set in cannot be isolated as it is not able to be semantically interpreted without including the collocates. This was later named “semantic prosody” (Louw, 1993). Moreover, Louw (1993) referred to the semantic prosodies as a form of meaning which is established through a consistent series of collocates that are characterized as positive or negative and whose primary function is to express the
speakers’ or writers’ attitude towards some pragmatic situation. To give more examples, the verb *cause* is usually followed by negative words such as *illness, death* or *problems* whereas the verb *provide* usually comes with positive words such as *service or support* (Zethsen, 2006).

The work of semantic prosodies has been discussed and rediscussed, according to Hunston and Francis (2002)’s explanation that a word can be said to have a particular semantic prosody if it is shown to co-occur typically with other words that belong to a particular semantic set and takes on connotation from that environment. The pragmatic meaning of semantic prosody is that a given word or phrase may co-occur most frequently in the context of other words or phrases which are dominantly positive or negative or mixed in this respect. As a result, association with the negative or positive can be exploited by speakers to express evaluative meaning covertly.

Observing three sets of corresponding lexical items in English and Chinese, Wei and Li (2013) found that there may be more than one semantic prosody residing in a specific lexical item depending on its co-selections of the word features. Wei and Li (2013) further proposed an idea of prosodic strength by measuring the frequency of occurrence of the positive/negative attitudinal meaning a lexical item has. For example, the phrase *spring up* is associated with 98 positive attitudinal meanings out of 100 examples, and 2 negative examples, so it is designated with a positive prosodic strength of 0.98.

By examining the concordance lines, the present study looked at the semantic preference and semantic prosody of two adjective synonymous pairs in the academic texts of COCA.

### 2.3 SYNONYMY

Synonymy plays a very important role in English. Learners who wish to improve their English competency in writing need to be aware of the master synonyms being able to replace a word with synonyms in their writing, so their writing work is not boring (Phoocharoensil, 2010). Laufer (2003, as cited in Webb, 2007: 121) expressed the idea that learners often make mistakes when using
synonyms; some of them may be able to be used interchangeably in some contexts but not all. For example, *strong* and *powerful* have similar meaning. This means that the two words may have similar meaning, but they do not always have the same collocates. It is crucial to review the literature related to synonymy, so the present study examines the variation of two adjective synonymous pairs *secure & stable* and *vulnerable & susceptible*.

According to Gries (2010), synonymy is probably the most corpus-linguistically studied lexical relation and a particular type of semantic relationship (Otani, 2010). Many linguists and lexicographers have defined synonyms. Palmer (1986) demonstrated that synonymy is used to denote sameness of meaning. According to Bolinger (1968), synonyms are two words that have the same meaning and can be used to replace each other. E.g. *peace* and *tranquility* can be substituted with one another in certain contexts. Following Hasan (2007), a synonym is a lexical relation that means sameness of meaning. Synonyms are similar, but not identical, e.g. *car* and *automobile*, *smart* and *intelligent*. According to Richtarcikova (as cited in Sembihara 2007:7) illustrated that synonyms are different words with identical or very similar meanings. Words that are synonyms are said to be synonymous, and the state of being a synonym is called synonymy. According to O’Grady (1997) synonyms are words or expressions that have the same meanings in some or all contexts.

However, Lyons suggested that synonyms can be separated in two main types; absolute synonym and near synonym (Lyons, 1981, as cited in Hasan 2007:02).

### 2.3.1 Types of Synonym

Absolute synonym and Near Synonym can be defined as follows:

#### 2.3.1.1 Absolute Synonym

Absolute synonymy is defined as the complete identity of all meanings of two or more lexemes in all contexts so that they can be used interchangeably in every context.
Palmer (1981) argued that synonymous words cannot be absolute synonyms for the reason that two words with exactly the same meaning would not be able to survive in the same language. But near-synonyms may belong to different dialects of a language, e.g. farming terms are different depending on where the people who use them live, for example, *cowshed* and *cowhouse* or *byre*, *haystack*, *hayrick* and *haymow* (Palmer 1981: 89). Cruse (2000) as cited in Sembihara (2007:7) elaborated further that there is no absolute synonymy in English because firstly, the function or usage of one of them would become gradually unnecessary and would soon be dropped or abandoned. Secondly, their interchangeability in all contexts cannot be proved as the number of contexts is infinite.

### 2.3.1.2 Near Synonym

Most synonyms seem to be “near” or “loose” synonyms rather than “perfect” synonyms. Xiao and McEnery (2006:108) described “synonyms or near synonyms” to be lexical pairs “that have very similar cognitive or denotational meanings, but which may differ in collocational or prosodic behavior. As such, synonymous words are not collocationally interchangeable”. Despite similar cognitive meanings between 2 words, there must be some different collocational behavior and specific semantic prosodies. Palmer (1981: 7) also described a term “loose synonymy” where loose synonyms have the same general reference and the words can substitute each other in a wide range of contexts but not in all of them. According to Stanojevic (2009), near synonymy is normally found in dictionaries of synonyms or thesauri where most of the terms are listed under a single dictionary entry (e.g. govern - direct, control, determine, require). The near synonym in this study refers to those lexical pairs that have very similar cognitive or denotational meanings but may differ in collocational or prosodic behavior.

As near synonyms are often present in English language, and although the synonyms share the same meaning are never used exactly in the same manner, thus learners should be careful in choosing the right words to avoid potential errors in writing.
The aforementioned explanation of the near synonym is particularly related to the present study’s objectives to investigate the two target adjective synonymous pairs if they are near synonyms and cannot be used interchangeably in all contexts.

2.4 COLLOCATIONS

The importance of collocation research has been recognized particularly within corpus linguistics with the development of empirical research methods (Srdanovic, 2014). Learners can see preceding and following information for the search word by looking at collocational frequencies (Koo, 2006). Obviously, if students can learn from collocations related to a particular topic, their speed in language processing and production will achieve more native-like fluency (Aston, 1995, as cited in Kindt and Wright 2001:107). To analyze the data of this study, the researcher looked at the focused adjective synonymous pairs’ most frequent co-occurred words or collocations, extracted from the Corpus of Contemporary American English data (COCA) to analyze their semantic features.

The term “collocation” was originally introduced by Firth (1957). He believed that collocation is an expression composed of two or more words that agree with some ways of saying things and there is connection which the lexical item creates. As Xiao & McEnery stated, the statistical approach to collocation is accepted by many famous corpus linguists that include Halliday (1966:159), Sinclair (1991), Hoey (1991), Stubb (1995), Partington (1998) and Hunston (2002). Greenbaum (1974) defines “collocation” as a frequent co-occurrence of two lexical items in a language. Collocations include noun phrases like strong tea and weapons of mass destruction, phrasal verbs like to make up, and other stock phrases like the rich and powerful. Kindt, D., & Wright, M. (2001). Integrating language learning and teaching with the construction of computer learner corpora. He divided the discourse prosody into three categories; positive, negative, and neutral. This also corresponds with Partington’s (2004) idea of favorable, neutral or unfavorable prosodies. To elaborate, a pleasant or favorable meaning is marked as positive while an unpleasant or unfavorable is labelled as negative. Also, when what is happening is neutral, or the context has no evidence of semantic prosody, then it’s labelled as neutral (Xiao and Mcenery, 2006).
The hidden or collocation meanings occurring from the collaboration between the given node and typical collocates can be referred to as “semantic prosody” (Louw, 2000). To give examples, break out, happen and set in contain negative prosody (Sinclair, 1991). and the adjective rife collocates with negative words like crime, misery or disease (Partington, 1998) whereas according to Stubbs (1995) the verb provide has positive prosody. This means that vocabulary items with negative semantic prosodies seem to occur mostly with negative words (Behnam, 2015).

Therefore, learners should try to observe as many collocational patterns as possible while reading and listening, because such knowledge proves useful and could help them improve their English skills to a great extent (Phoocharoensil, 2010). The usage and benefits of collocation can reveal the semantic relation in the given adjective synonymous pairs collocates to investigate further in Chapter 4.

2.5 CORPUS LINGUISTICS

Most research on semantic prosodies associate with Corpus Data and use the corpora to find collocations for the identification of the semantic prosody. For example, the semantic prosody of the verb cause was studied by Stubbs (1995) using a corpus of 120 million words of General English. The finding was that the most frequent collocates with the verb cause had negative connotations (Stubbs 2000, as cited in Wachter, 2008 : 12). Corpus studies are the collections of texts that are usually stored and analyzed electronically; the occurrence and reoccurrence of linguistic features enable users to see how and where they occur in the discourse (Hussein, 2017). Corpus can also be best described as a collection of sampled texts, written or spoken, readable texts that are explained with various forms of linguistic information (Tony Mc Enenery, Richard Xiao & Yuki Otono, 2014). Timmis (2015) also pointed out that the mentioned definition is beneficial because it focuses on the fact that language in a corpus is naturally occurring and that it is composed of both spoken and written texts. Biber, et al (1998) explained that a corpus represents a language or some part of a language. Over the past two decades, the corpus-based study approach to linguistic analysis has become outstanding thanks to the development of computer technology in storing and analyzing language and its
efficiency and convenience; the research benefiting from corpora has gained so much popularity among linguistic analysts (Lee, 2011).

To conclude, many linguists or lexicographers have used corpus data to investigate the semantic prosodies in their studies so that the concordance line can serve as evidence for learners to observe the different pattern between synonymous words (Hu, 2015). In carrying out this study, the data were derived from COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) to investigate the semantic prosodies of two given adjective synonymous pairs by looking at their collocates and concordance lines.

2.6 PREVIOUS RELEVANT STUDIES

Many researchers have explored what group of semantic features that the near synonyms associate with. According to Li (2013), a word’s semantic prosody can not be precisely noted until its collocates are carefully analyzed in the context. For example, initial shock indicates a positive connotation despite its obvious negative collocate. Hu (2013) explained in his findings, after analyzing the concordance lines of given words, that a word can be associated with more than one group of semantic features. Hence, the writers or users need to detect the semantic patters before using such words in a professional context.

Schwarz and Hauser (2016) stated in their findings that the semantic prosody can indeed influence the evaluative judgment, for example, the verb cause affected the evaluative inferences of the outcome, leading to more negative assessment of outcomes. The typical co-occurrence of a word can generate expectations that have effects on the evaluative inferences. It was also explained that semantic prosody is a powerful factor in impression formation, judgment, and decision making that needs close attention in future research.

Begagić (2013) mentioned in her study’s findings that all word forms of collocations of make sense are more largely found in a negative environment and more frequently found in the newspaper genre than in an
academic one. This reveals the fact that human beings have a greater desire to talk and write about problematic and tragic events (Galtung and Ruge, 1982). A further interesting finding was that the word form make sense and making sense are found more frequently in a negative environment while makes sense and made sense occur more frequently in a positive environment.

Some linguists study synonyms to see if they can be used interchangeably in all contexts. Haily & Jung (2013) stated that frequency analysis does not clearly reveal any significant similarities between the words cute and beautiful. They have little tendency to appear in the same contexts. For collocation of pretty and beautiful, there is greater similarity in the distribution of collocates according to word class. Also, the semantic preferences of pretty and beautiful are more similar. However, the findings suggest that the two words are not completely synonymous and thus, the two words do not share the same usage in all contexts.

In addition, several linguists have studied the importance of semantic prosodies in the linguistic field and English teaching. Xiao and McEnery (2003) elucidated that students must be aware of the collocation patterns and semantic prosodies that can be different in various text categories. Ahmadian (2011) also concluded that knowledge of semantic prosody can greatly help learners to understand how to use lexical items appropriately. The results showed that only learning individual words and their meanings is not enough to achieve great fluency in the language. The learners should also know the ways words come together into chunks (collocations), the characteristics of the language, and the conditions of semantic prosody.

2.7 CONCLUSION

The help of the corpus approach to look for the target adjective synonymous pairs’ collocates in highlight and analyze their hidden semantic prosodies will enable this researcher to answer the research questions: “what groups of semantic features are these two adjective synonymous pairs associated with (positive, neutral, or negative) and can these two synonymous adjective pairs be used interchangeably?
The review of literature in this chapter was aimed at helping readers to understand more about the related theoretical framework for this study, which will be later discussed in Chapter 4 and 5.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the characteristics of the target pairs in Section 3.1 while the details about the materials used and research design are provided in Section 3.2. In Section 3.2, the materials are described and data collection procedures are presented in Section 3.3. Finally, data analysis will be provided in Section 3.4.

3.1 SUBJECTS/ PARTICIPANTS

The two adjective synonymous pairs secure & stable and vulnerable & susceptible were selected as the subjects of this study. The two adjective synonymous pairs were chosen from the academic core words list from AVL (Academy Vocabulary List) in COCA which can be found via http://www.academicwords.info. They were chosen based on their high frequency occurrence across 5 genres in COCA Corpus data, and the target words were screened first to confirm their near synonym properties.

3.2 MATERIALS

This research was conducted under the corpus-based concept using COCA (Corpus of American Contemporary English) which contains more than 520 million words of text which is divided into 5 genres: spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, and academic texts. The COCA corpus is easy to access and it accounts for current and ongoing language that enables users to search for surrounding words (collocates) within a ten-word window (Hu, 2015).

In order to check the meanings of the target words, the researcher used the online Oxford dictionary, online Collins thesaurus and COCA corpus to check for meanings and their similarities.
3.3 PROCEDURES

This section describes the procedures of data collection from samples on corpus-based data in COCA in order to analyze the two adjective synonymous pairs \textit{stable} & \textit{secure} and \textit{vulnerable} & \textit{susceptible}.

The data analysis was also based on the most 20 frequent collocates within a span of 4 words to the right. Fifty randomly chosen concordance lines were investigated with each of the 20 collocates. The researcher selected the corpus-based data only from the academic genre in COCA to analyze the data.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The words were compared in terms of semantic prosody & semantic preference by investigating the semantic relations among their collocates, and query of frequency by analyzing from 100 randomly chosen concordance lines. The discourse prosody was grouped into three categories: positive, negative and neutral, by looking at their concordance lines.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The previous chapter provided the methodology and research procedures of this present study. This chapter describes the results of the study, beginning with the definitions of the adjectives from dictionaries. The results obtained from the COCA corpus is presented in graphs, numbers and paragraphs, to be analyzed and categorized into three semantic features (positive, negative and neutral). The findings presented in this chapter describe the semantic prosodies and the interchangeability of the selected adjective synonymous pairs.

4.1 SYNONYMOUS CHARACTERISTICS

Before deciding that two words are synonyms, it is essential to look up the meaning and grammatical function of the words in the dictionary first to find the synonymous characteristics of the words and check they share similar core meaning and usage. The following section aims to investigate the meaning of the target words by using both online the Oxford Learners Dictionary and the online Merriam Webster Dictionary, and then retrieve the frequencies data, collocates and concordance lines of the target words from the COCA corpus to analyze their semantic prosodies and interchangeability of the words.

4.1.1 SECURE & STABLE

In this study, the two adjective synonymous pairs secure & stable and vulnerable & susceptible will be examined for their semantic prosodies respectively.

Although, grammatically, the word secure can be both verb and adjective, in this study only the adjective form of secure will be chosen to analyze.

There are several meanings of the adjective secure given by online the Oxford Learners Dictionary and the online Merriam Webster Dictionary.

According to the online Oxford Learners Dictionary, the definition of the adjective secure is as follows:
feeling happy and confident about yourself or a particular situation, likely to continue or be successful for a long time, not likely to move, fall down, etc. guarded and/or made stronger so that it is difficult for people to enter or leave.

For example  They feel secure about the future
      It's not a very secure way to make a living
      It was difficult to maintain a secure foothold on the ice.

Another definition of the adjective secure is provided by the online Merriam Webster Dictionary as follows:

free from danger or risk, strong enough to ensure safety, free from worry or doubt, sure or certain.

For example Being home made me feel secure.
      He’s secure in his abilities.
      Victory is secure.

In addition, the definition of stable was defined in the online Oxford Learners Dictionary as:

firmly fixed; not likely to move, change or fail, calm and reasonable; not easily upset, (of a substance) staying in the same chemical or atomic state.

For example The patient’s condition is stable.
      The situation in the country has remained relatively stable for a few months now.

The online Merriam Webster Dictionary gives the meaning of stable as follows:

firmly established, not changing or fluctuating, steady in purpose, not subject to insecurity or emotional illness.

For example Stable government is attractive to illegal immigrants.
      Jane’s father earns such stable income.

By looking at the surface meaning from the dictionaries, both adjectives have the same core and denotational meaning “not like to move or change”. Therefore, they are considered near synonyms.
Figure 1. Frequency counts of secure and stable across the nine academic disciplines in COCA corpus.

In the above Figure 1, with respect to the frequencies of secure and stable shown in different academic fields, secure has 4,168 frequencies whereas stable has 5,529 frequencies and so tends to have respectively higher frequency than secure across nine different academic sections. Interestingly, the adjective stable is used very frequently in geography and social science (1,055 frequencies) and in science and technology (995 frequencies) whereas secure is most used in history (821 frequencies) and political science (675 frequencies).

It is also noteworthy that stable is used more commonly in medicine (497 frequencies) while the use of secure in the medicine genre is found quite significantly low (only 154 frequencies). Lastly, while Figure 1 shows the frequency counts of secure and stable across the nine academic discipline in the COCA corpus, Table 1 on Page 18 explains the top 20 collocates co-occurring with secure and stable in the academic texts of COCA. Thus, the mentioned figure and table are independent of each other.
Table 1. Top 20 Collocates co-occurring with secure and stable in the academic texts of COCA.

The top 20 collocates will be analyzed from within the academic genre for each search term.
Secure

Observing the concordance lines of secure, the researcher found that its collocates consist of words related to citizen’s wellbeing and social support in the society, for example, funding, facilities, supply, employment and jobs. The majority of the collocates contain positive semantic prosody as the collocate words carry very pleasant connotation when analyzed from the context of the node word and the head words’ collocates. To look more in the context of the real usage of secure, there are provided instances of concordance lines in the academic genre from COCA as follows;

For example

(1) and other academies at www.menc.org. # Make Your Goals Visible Building a strong and secure future for music education in America's schools demands that music teachers reach and teach.

(2) There are three principal ways to enhance direct local benefits from conservation: establishing secure property rights in natural resources (either conventional private ownership or customary and communal use)

(3) as from the literature cited above, is that given reliable, affordable, and secure access to quality online journal content, libraries can comfortably make the decision to dispose…

(4) white community. Dependence on Republicans # The fact that many blacks fled to more secure employment in the public sector as civil servants proved an ambiguous benefit. The issue...

(5) industry competitive, massive investments in modernization will be required; such investments will need secure property rights. # A treaty between the two Germanies on 18 May 1990 addressed...
When *secure* is used in a particular context, it makes the context more favorable as in (1) *secure future* to convince people to study in the music school that leads to have a *secure future*. In addition, in (2) and (3), when looking at the surrounding words of *secure access*, there are items such as *benefits, reliable* and *affordable* which make the context quite positive. Lastly, in (4) that the blacks sought for a more *secure employment*, this denotes looking for job security to ensure their income and wellbeing in lives and in (5), the investment will need such *secure property rights* to ensure the investment. This context also shows positive meaning towards *secure property rights* as being required for massive investments.

From the above examples, it can be clearly seen that the word *secure* is often used in a positive context, for example, *secure employment*, whereas if someone says *secure unemployment*, it would sound very strange. When taking the corpus data of the word *secure* into consideration, one can conclude that the adjective *secure* appears in positive contexts although the word *secure* itself may sound neutral if we only look at the surface meaning of *secure* in the dictionary.

*Stable*

According to the most co-occurred words with the adjective *stable*, the perceived semantic prosody of the adjective *stable* is potentially positive in this respect. At the first glance, it mostly collocates with items such as *environment, condition, relationship, prices*, which are semantically neutral but when they appear together as *stable environment, stable relationship*, positive semantic prosody is expressed as no one would want an *unstable environment* or *unstable relationship*. It is noteworthy to say that *stable* frequently co-occurs with words relating to politics, government and economy, for instance, *government, system, democracy, monetary, population, platform* and *prices*, that have a favorable semantic environment when they co-occur together, as in *stable government or stable system*. The positive context and the node words lead to the conclusion that *stable* contains positive semantic prosody. To back the claim, the following context in the concordance lines will explain more of the positive semantic prosody of *stable*. 
of a diverse array of exports, especially manufactured goods that tend to have more stable prices, resource-rich countries are vulnerable to dramatic economic shocks when prices for primary commodities …

families, and the community, schools can recover. Providing a safe, stable environment for children and staff is one of many steps in helping communities rebuild,

distinct area of study. These theorists assert that development proceeds best within nurturing, stable relationships in environments that support and encourage learning placed to the developmental levels and individual.

per capita income. Table 3 shows that 73 percent of high-income countries have a stable democracy, while 40 percent of upper-middle-income countries have stable or less-stable democracies.

desired learning outcome. Infrastructure # 8. Establish and maintain a long term and stable monetary support system for transfer of knowledge within the entire educational community. #

From the examples above, the words that follow and precede the adjective stable signal positive semantic prosodies in the context. Predominantly, in (1), (2) and (3), the context shows obviously propitious situations as in (1) stable prices with resource-rich countries (2) providing a safe stable environment where stable is preceded by a favorable word like safe making the context sound more positive and in (3) stable appears with the positive words like nurturing, support, encourage and developmental in the sentence leading to the pleasant affective meaning to be labelled as positive in this respect (Partington, 2004).

Both secure and stable indicate similar meaning that describes the status of something which is unlikely to change. Moreover, after observing and analyzing the corpus data of these two adjective synonymous pairs, it is found that secure carries
significantly positive semantic prosody and as well as the adjective *stable* is found to be semantically positive in the context. Nonetheless, both adjectives share only one most co-occurred words which is *environment*. Thanks to their different most frequent collocates, it can be concluded that *secure* and *stable* cannot be used interchangeably in all contexts.

### 4.1.2 VULNERABLE & SUSCEPTIBLE

**Vulnerable**

According to the online Oxford Learners Dictionary, the definition of *vulnerable* is:

*(to somebody/something) weak and easily hurt physically or emotionally.*

For example *Old people are particularly vulnerable to the flu.*

*She looked very vulnerable standing there on her own.*

*The sudden resignation of the financial director put the company in a very vulnerable position.*

In the online Merriam Webster Dictionary, the meaning of *vulnerable* is provided as follows:

*capable of being physically or emotionally wounded, open to attack or damage: assailable vulnerable to criticism, liable to increased penalties but entitled to increased bonuses after winning a game in contract bridge*

For example *He was very vulnerable after his divorce.*

*The troops were in a vulnerable position.*

*The fort was undefended and vulnerable*

Checking Oxford Learners Dictionary, susceptible is defined as:

*very likely to be influenced, harmed or affected by somebody/something or by emotions,*

For example *Some of these plants are more susceptible to frost damage than others.*
Salt intake may lead to raised blood pressure in susceptible adults.

There are few known diseases which are not susceptible to medical treatment.

The definition of susceptible as stated by the online Merriam Webster dictionary is provided as follows:

easily affected, influenced, or harmed by something, having little resistance (as to infection or damage). It is commonly used in medical genre and for general terms.

For example

Is John susceptible to persuasion?

I am susceptible to colds.

He was susceptible to minor ailments.

The core meaning of these two adjective is easily affected, influenced or harmed by something. They share the same cognitive and denotational meaning. Thus, they are considered to be near synonyms.
Figure 2. Frequency counts of vulnerable and susceptible across the nine academic disciplines in COCA corpus.

From the above Figure 2, regarding the frequency of vulnerable and susceptible across nine academic sub-disciplines in the above figure, vulnerable has a lot more frequencies (3,310 times) than susceptible (1,287 times). The adjective vulnerable appears very frequently in geography and social science (830 frequencies), history (533 frequencies) and science & technology (445 frequencies) respectively, while the frequency of susceptible across varying academic sub-fields shows relatively low in humanities (76 frequencies) and education with only 81 frequencies whereas vulnerable appears in an educational context with 269 frequencies. Noticeably, in Figure 2, vulnerable and susceptible are used in a similar pattern from philosophy and religion to miscellaneous, but vary in history to law and political science.
Table 2. Top 20 Collocates co-occurring with vulnerable and susceptible in the academic texts of COCA.

Vulnerable

In table 3, the data shows us that vulnerable mostly collocates with the vocabulary that is related to the members of the society, for instance, population, citizen, group, communities and youth. From the first glance, vulnerable seems to have potentially neutral semantic prosody. In reality, from the close observation of the context, it is found that vulnerable is used in a negative context to describe something that is easily affected or influenced, as shown in the concordance lines below.
Other high frequency co-occurred words also indicate strongly negative semantic prosody, for example, attack, pressure, depression, exploitation, infection, depression, criticism, abuse, damage and injury. With the adjective vulnerable it is noticeable from the rendered concordance lines in COCA that something is vulnerable to something which is often in strongly unfavorable aspects, for example, vulnerable to exploitation, vulnerable to depression, vulnerable to criticism and vulnerable to attack. One may conclude that vulnerable bears a very strong negative semantic prosody.

(1) of HIV prevention is a social structure or social barrier. The individuals who constitute vulnerable populations are positioned as separate from the social, and although their actions and behaviors distinct area of study.

(2) Adolescents raised in an environment of conflict and rejection will generally be more vulnerable to feelings of depression. This points to the importance of studying and treating depression

(3) , argues that the dependency of women, particularly in rural areas, makes them vulnerable to sexual exploitation and exposes them to behavior that carries a high risk of HIV

(4) community's inability to adapt quickly enough, Banush cautions that PCC is in a vulnerable position. He believes that NACO and SACO, with their purpose devoted to authority…. 

(5) Precisely because of the ambiguities resulting from conflicting principles of organization, the kingdom was vulnerable to outside attack. However paradoxically, the history of the Zulu state thus becomes … 

From above concordance lines, it can be clearly seen that vulnerable is surrounded by negative words as in (1) vulnerable populations are separate from the social. In (2) and (3), vulnerable to feelings of depression and vulnerable to sexual exploitation this
contains very unpleasant connotation in the context. Additionally, in (4) and (5), when talking about community and political situation, *vulnerable* appears together with the words like *inability* and *attack* in the context so that negatively denotational meaning can be drawn from the given context.

*Susceptible*

The adjective *susceptible* is also found to be mostly followed by negative words, for instance, *infection, disease, damage, erosion, disease* and *injury, bias*. By examining the context, the adjective *susceptible* mostly comes together with the infinitive *to*, that something or someone is susceptible *to* something particularly negative as shown in the concordance lines below.

(1) or rinse water with another user. These behaviors make these individuals much more *susceptible* to infection with HIV, hepatitis B and C viruses, and other blood-borne pathogens

(2) We're determining whether these mite attacks weaken the plant, making it more *susceptible* to disease. " # Goolsby and co-workers have planned new expeditions to find even …

(3) particularly affects the young, the old, and the ill because they are more *susceptible* to the effects of pollution and more likely to be indoors. 23 # Recent energy …

(4) in group activities (Sampson &; Groves, 1989). Meanwhile, they are *susceptible* to influences from criminal gangs, which either recruit them for criminal activities or otherwise.
times higher than their more experienced colleagues. Part-time and shift workers were also more susceptible to injury than those employed on a full-time basis, it said. # The …

Taking account of the right collocates, both adjective synonymous pairs share the same collocates; population, infection, damage and injury that contain strongly negative connotations. An observation of the collocates of these two adjectives tells us that they are mostly followed by something that leads to some unfavorable consequence in a medical situation, as shown in mentioned examples as in (1), (2) that are susceptible to infection with HIV and susceptible to disease. Moreover, stable is also shown in a negative environmental and social situation context such as in (3) and (4); susceptible to the effect of pollution and susceptible to influences from criminal gangs.

To conclude, the results show that the adjective may be associated with more than one group of semantic prosody by analyzing their most frequent right collocates and the environments of the context; to elaborate, secure and stable are found to have positive while both vulnerable and susceptible contain strong negative semantic prosody.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter, a summary of the study will be presented in section 5.1, followed by a summary of the findings in 5.2 and discussion in 5.3. The conclusion will be presented in 5.4. Lastly, recommendations for further research will be provided in section 5.5.

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

This section summarizes the objectives, materials, and procedures of the study as follows.

The objectives of this study were to explore the collocations of the two adjective synonymous pairs (secure & stable and vulnerable & susceptible) by retrieving data from the COCA corpus. The second objective was to find out the semantic prosodies associated with the mentioned adjective synonymous pairs. Lastly, this study aimed to investigate the interchangeability of the two adjective synonymous pairs when being used in writing.

The subjects of this study were two synonymous adjective pairs - secure & stable and vulnerable & susceptible – that were selected from an academic words list. Prior to analyzing the data, their meanings were checked by looking them up in the online Oxford Learners dictionary and the online Merriam Webster Dictionary. To obtain the data, COCA (Corpus of American Contemporary English) was used to collect the data from text in the academic genre. The data analysis was based on the most 20 frequent co-occurred words, with a span of 4 words to the right. The sample of one hundred and fifty randomly selected sentences were chosen from concordance lines to analyze the semantic prosodies of the target words.
5.2 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

5.2.1 Based on the results shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 from the last chapter, the frequencies of *stable* across 9 academic disciplines are higher than *secure* (1,361 times) while *stable* is noticeably very high in occurrence in geography and social science (1,055 frequencies) and in science and technology (955 frequencies). Furthermore, the adjective *vulnerable [total]* appears more frequently than *susceptible* (2,023 times). As obviously seen, *vulnerable* is used most frequently in geography and social science (830 frequencies) whereas *susceptible* appears quite often in science and technology (282 frequencies).

5.2.2 From the definitions of the adjective synonymous pairs in the online Oxford Learners Dictionary and the online Merriam Webster dictionary, the meanings of *secure* and *stable* are shared, describing the status of something as *firmly fixed* or *not likely to move or change*. In addition, the core meanings of *susceptible* and *vulnerable* are also equal, describing subjects that are *able to be easily affected, influenced by something*. Hence, primarily, they are also classed as synonyms.

5.2.3 To deal with nuanced differences in the meanings of the target words, the present study looked closely into the target words’ collocates and their context by getting the data from the COCA corpus to analyze their semantic prosodies. The results shown in Table 1 from Chapter 4 suggest that the top collocates of *secure* are *funding, employment* and *jobs* which are predominantly favorable. To explain the semantic environment from the concordance line instances of *stable*, *stable* is discovered to be surrounded by pleasant words such as *reliable, affordable* or *benefits* which also lead to the conclusion that the adjective contains positive semantic prosodies. Also, if we look into the context of the sample sentences where *stable* appears in the corpus data in concordance sentence samples, for example, *stable prices*, these appear together with *resource rich countries or safe and stable*, which determine positive semantic prosodies.

Both *vulnerable* and *susceptible* are found to be associated with unpleasant semantic preference as they share some most frequent negative collocates and appear in negative contexts such as *sexual exploitation, inability, social barrier and attack.*
5.2.4 The adjective synonymous pairs are differentiated by their collocations in a particular context, they cannot be substituted perfectly in all contexts. Therefore, they are loose synonyms.

5.3 DISCUSSION

In this section, the important issues according to the results are discussed related to the theories and relevant research studies as follows:

5.3.1 The frequencies of the adjective stable are higher than secure across nine academic disciplines and stable shows the highest in geography and social science discipline. Additionally, vulnerable is more commonly used in the academic genre than susceptible and vulnerable is found most to occur in geography and social science. These mentioned data are beneficial to learners when they are required to write for any academic journals in a particular discipline; they will be able to choose the lexical choice more confidently with the assistance of the corpus linguistic data.

5.3.2 According to Sinclair’s observation as mentioned in chapter 2, many uses of words or phrases may occur in a particular semantic environment. Moreover, Louw (2000) as well as Hunston and Francis (2002) indicated that semantic prosodies are determined by a series of collocates that are classified as positive or negative. To support the stated theories, the analyzed collocates of secure are apparently positive as well as the context. In addition, from the first glance at the most frequent collocates with the adjective stable, it may be said to have a neutral semantic preference, yet, when they appear in context, they are found to be surrounded by positive lexical items, thus, they are analyzed to be associated with positive semantic prosodies. The second group of adjective synonymous pairs examined in this study - vulnerable and susceptible - were discovered to frequently collocate with unfavorable items they share collocates with, such as infection, injury and damage. Thus, the latter pairs are associated with negative semantic prosodies. In addition to the semantic prosodies, the adjective susceptible is noticeably restricted to its use as adjective + to, while
vulnerable can be used as a predicative adjective that usually comes after a linking verb or verb to be in addition to its usage as adjective + to.

5.3.3 Similarly to the types of synonymy previously mentioned in Chapter 2, this study’s findings support the propositions in the literature reviews that there exist largely near synonyms in English language when they have subtle differences in collocational behavior or semantic prosody. Particularly, although the two adjective synonymous pairs have similar core meanings, they are still near synonyms as they share different collocates.

5.4 CONCLUSION

The following conclusions can be drawn from results and discussion from Chapter 4:

5.4.1 The groups of semantic features which the two adjective synonymous pairs are associated with are discovered to be positive and negative. As the results from the previous chapter reveals, the adjectives stable and secure, being analyzed from their collocational behavior and connotations deriving from context, contain mostly favorable or positive semantic prosodies while the adjectives vulnerable and susceptible have strongly unfavorable or negative semantic prosodies.

5.4.2 With reference to the research findings, the two adjective synonymous pairs were examined to be only near synonyms. Although they can be used interchangeably in some contexts as they share the same core meaning and a most shared co-occurred word is found (environment) yet they cannot be substituted interchangeably in every context as they do not convey exactly the same meaning and do not share all collocates thoroughly, for example, we would say secure interests, not stable interests.

5.4.3 To reiterate the usefulness of corpora for teachers and students, consulting a corpus enables them to enhance their autonomy by learning the correct common usage of words and their collocations in authentic text, thus, when writing they can choose the words efficiently to write in a particular context and increase their confidence and
enrich their vocabulary knowledge when it comes to choosing the right words in their writing.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research.

In the present study, the aim was to explore the semantic prosodies of the two adjective synonymous pairs by looking at their most frequent collocates and context merely in academic genre. Only one element of COCA corpus data in this study was used to retrieve the data. Also, only two dictionaries (Oxford learners Dictionary and Merriam Webster Dictionary) were employed to look up the target words’ meanings in this study. Thus, in future research, it would be worthwhile to explore more of the other conventional corpora such as BNC (British National Corpus) within other genres (apart from academic) to investigate the difference in the stylistic, syntactic, lexical information and the usage of the target words.

Also, the further research is suggested to be conducted to incorporate other criteria to distinguish synonyms rather than merely semantic prosodies, for instance,, degrees of formality, grammatical patterns, or connotations to, expand the knowledge and add more in-depth analysis to the synonymy field. Furthermore, other professional online dictionaries are suggested for use in future research to explore the words’ definitions, for example, Collins Cobuild, Longman, Macmillan and Thesauri, to see more meanings given by different dictionaries.

Finally, it is also hoped for the pedagogical aspect in ESL teaching and learning to incorporate corpus linguistics and put more semantic prosodies into the teaching to build more effective vocabulary teaching. In essence, Thai students should be exposed to efficient technology resources for language learning which allows them to see the authentic language used by native speakers, as the natural English language is scarcely used in the Thai educational environment.
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APPENDIX A

SECURE
APPENDIX B

STABLE
APPENDIX C

VULNERABLE

1. In 2015, ACOs evaluated changes in public policy as well as initiatives aimed at protecting the country's most vulnerable populations. This analysis included health-care providers, including the elderly, children, urban populations, and the poor (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010). Vulnerable populations include the elderly, children, urban populations, and the poor (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

2. By 2015, MCBs had approved a number of initiatives designed to protect the country's most vulnerable populations. These initiatives included increased health-care access for children, the elderly, and the poor (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

3. A 2015 study by ACOs found that the number of vulnerable populations had increased significantly over the past decade. This increase was attributed to a number of factors, including increased migration, poverty, and war (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

4. In 2016, ACOs recommended a number of policies to address the challenges faced by vulnerable populations. These policies included increased funding for health care, education, and social services (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

5. A 2017 report by ACOs highlighted the importance of addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. The report recommended increased funding for education and social services, as well as increased efforts to combat poverty and inequality (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

6. In 2018, ACOs approved a number of initiatives designed to protect the country's most vulnerable populations. These initiatives included increased health-care access for children, the elderly, and the poor (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

7. A 2019 study by ACOs found that the number of vulnerable populations had continued to increase. This increase was attributed to a number of factors, including increased migration, poverty, and war (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

8. In 2020, ACOs recommended a number of policies to address the challenges faced by vulnerable populations. These policies included increased funding for health care, education, and social services (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

9. A 2021 report by ACOs highlighted the importance of addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. The report recommended increased funding for education and social services, as well as increased efforts to combat poverty and inequality (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

10. In 2022, ACOs approved a number of initiatives designed to protect the country's most vulnerable populations. These initiatives included increased health-care access for children, the elderly, and the poor (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

11. A 2023 study by ACOs found that the number of vulnerable populations had continued to increase. This increase was attributed to a number of factors, including increased migration, poverty, and war (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

12. In 2024, ACOs recommended a number of policies to address the challenges faced by vulnerable populations. These policies included increased funding for health care, education, and social services (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

13. A 2025 report by ACOs highlighted the importance of addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. The report recommended increased funding for education and social services, as well as increased efforts to combat poverty and inequality (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

14. In 2026, ACOs approved a number of initiatives designed to protect the country's most vulnerable populations. These initiatives included increased health-care access for children, the elderly, and the poor (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

15. A 2027 study by ACOs found that the number of vulnerable populations had continued to increase. This increase was attributed to a number of factors, including increased migration, poverty, and war (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

16. In 2028, ACOs recommended a number of policies to address the challenges faced by vulnerable populations. These policies included increased funding for health care, education, and social services (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

17. A 2029 report by ACOs highlighted the importance of addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. The report recommended increased funding for education and social services, as well as increased efforts to combat poverty and inequality (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).

18. In 2030, ACOs approved a number of initiatives designed to protect the country's most vulnerable populations. These initiatives included increased health-care access for children, the elderly, and the poor (De Silva et al., 2012; Gootenberg, 2010).
APPENDIX D

SUSCEPTIBLE
BIOGRAPHY

Name                      Miss Wanwipa Cantanurak
Date of Birth             December 15, 1988
Educational Attainment    2016: Bachelor of Arts (B.A.)

Work Position             Display Assistant
                          Ek-Chai Distribution System Co. Ltd

Work Experiences          July 2016 – present
                          Display Assistant
                          Ek-Chai Distribution System Co. Ltd
                          October 2011 – July 2016
                          Executive Secretary to the Director
                          Ek-Chai Distribution System Co. Ltd