

# STUDENTS' PERCEPTION AND ERROR ANALYSIS OF SIMPLE PRESENT IN WRITING DESCRIPTIVE TEXT AT PRIVATE VOCATIONAL SCHOOL

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## ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the most frequent grammatical errors made by 10th-grade students at SMK Pembangunan Nasional Bekasi when writing descriptive texts and explores their perceptions through a questionnaire. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through writing tasks and questionnaires. The findings reveal four types of errors: omission (49%), misformation (31%), misordering (11%), and addition (10%). Omission errors were the most dominant, accounting for nearly half of the total 113 errors. Despite reporting no difficulty in writing descriptive texts, students' writing tests showed frequent errors, highlighting a discrepancy between perceived and actual performance.*

*Keywords: descriptive writing; error analysis; simple present tense; students' perception; types of errors.*

## INTRODUCTION

Writing in a foreign language poses significant challenges for EFL learners. In Indonesia, students typically spend around twelve years learning English, from elementary school to university. Despite this extensive period of study, the results often fail to meet the expectations of both learners and their parents. Many students grasp grammar concepts and can write stories, but they struggle to speak English fluently. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding learners, yet even after a decade of instruction, many students fail to reach an advanced level. Persistent difficulties with foundational skills, particularly speaking, suggest that the learning process has not been effective.

In real-life situations, learners' English proficiency is often judged based on their speaking ability (Kuning, 2019). Language serves as a medium for expressing ideas and emotions through movements, symbols, and sounds. While each country has its own national language, English has become the most widely used language globally. However, speaking skills are particularly complex and present significant challenges for learners (Suranto & Rahmat, 2020; Tanjung & Fitri, 2020). Similarly, writing is considered an intricate and demanding skill, often regarded as the most challenging to master among all language skills. According to (Adas & Bakir, 2013), developing strong writing skills

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requires significant time and effort for planning and composing, making it a particularly arduous task.

Grammar is a kind of important part that students must understand in learning the English language. Grammar is the support system of communication and learning to communicate better (Suryanto, 2018). Grammar is very important to be learned for everyone who wants to master the English language because learning grammar may help students to be able to arrange words correctly (Willis, 2021). Brown (2007) considers an error to be “a noticeable deviation from the grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the inter-language competence of the learner.” Sa’diah (2017) states that error analysis is the technique for identifying and describing errors systematically made by students. The technique for identifying means to check just how many students actually make a particular error and how many use that language item correctly. The errors that students make when writing descriptive texts, the most common type of error that students make when writing descriptive texts, and the student’s perception of writing descriptive texts are some of the problems that need to be identified in this research.

According to the Minister of Education and Culture’s Basic Framework and Curriculum Structure, students are expected to compose texts, such as descriptive texts, by adhering to the appropriate text structure and linguistic elements. This expectation aligns with the goal of ensuring students can write correctly. In descriptive texts, the simple present tense is commonly used, as it is suitable for describing daily activities or actions that occur regularly. Sentences in the simple present tense typically consist of a subject and a verb or predicate, which is a defining characteristic of this tense.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Definition of writing

Description in writing is the process of creating visual images and sensory impressions through words. More often, (Woodson, 1982) stated that a description is a part of another piece of writing and used to inform audience about how something or someone looked or to persuade an audience to see something from the researchers' point of view. A description recreates sense impressions by translating into words the feel, sound, taste, smell, and look of things. Emotions may be described too, feelings such as happiness, fear, loneliness, gloom, and joy. descriptive text is used to create a visual image of people, places, and even units of times-days, or seasons (Irawati, 2015).

According to Hayati (2017), writing is a thinking process, because writing is a process of putting ideas down on paper to transform thoughts into words and give them structure and coherent organization. Hayati (2017) also said, “writing is a complex process and as such contains an element of mystery and surprise. But we know and believe that writing is a skill that anyone can learn to manage.” The meaning of writing is not only a way of thinking and learning but also contributes to personal development. Writing is also the most difficult skill when it is learned by foreign language learners. Writing is also a difficult skill for native speakers and non-native speakers: because writers must be able to write on multiple issues such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary and mechanics such as punctuation and spelling.

### 2.2. Descriptive Text and generic structure

Wishon & Burks (1980) stated that “descriptive writing reproduces the way things look, smell, taste, feel or sound; it may also evoke moods, such as happiness, loneliness,

or fear.” [Muhsin \(2017\)](#) said that the descriptive writing should be concrete and detailed, so the readers know and understand what the writer is telling about. Writing is one way to communicate with other people besides speaking, reading, and listening. The word “writing” seems to be very simple and easy to understand. However, it cannot be ignored. When a student writes a paragraph, he or she should write not only semantically correctly but he or she should also use correct grammar. Writing is not a spontaneous activity. It is learned in formal instruction. The context of this kind of text is the description of a particular thing, animal, person, and others.

The generic structure of descriptive text consists of Identification and Description. [Gerot & Wignell \(1995\)](#) mention that there are two components in the descriptive text:

- 2.2.1. Identification: to identify the phenomenon to be described. The identification usually occurs in the first paragraph and to identify the phenomenon.
- 2.2.2. Description: describes parts, qualities, and characteristics. The description consists of describing the object (place, animal, person, thing, etc).

### 2.3. Simple Present

The simple present tense is used to express general facts, habitual actions, or universal truths ([Leo, 2021](#)). Its purpose is not only to convey general truths but also to describe daily routines or scheduled events, making it a versatile tense for discussing regular and predictable actions. This tense is particularly important in descriptive texts, as it allows the writer to present facts and characteristics about a subject in a straightforward and consistent manner.

According to [Sersanawawi \(2020\)](#), the structure of the simple present tense follows the pattern: Subject + Infinitive + Object (S + Infinitive + O). Additionally, for singular third-person subjects (he, she, it), an "-s" or "-es" is added to the verb to maintain subject-verb agreement. For example, "She walks to school" or "He watches TV every evening." This rule emphasizes the need for attention to detail in sentence construction.

Furthermore, the simple present tense is often accompanied by adverbs of frequency, such as "always," "often," "sometimes," and "never," to indicate the regularity of actions. For instance, "They always eat breakfast at 7 AM" highlights a habitual action. Mastery of the simple present tense is essential for learners as it forms the foundation for effective communication in English, particularly in describing routines, schedules, and general truths accurately.

### 2.4. Error and Mistake

An error differs from a mistake in the context of language learning. An error refers to a systematic deviation caused by a lack of language competence, whereas a mistake is a performance issue that occurs when learners fail to use a known language system correctly ([Owu-Ewie, Charles, & Williams, 2017](#)). Errors reflect gaps in a learner's understanding or knowledge of the target language, while mistakes are typically occasional and linked to lapses in concentration or execution.

Errors are common occurrences in language learning, especially for EFL learners. English, as a global language, presents unique learning challenges, which can lead to errors during both oral and written communication. These errors often stem from insufficient knowledge of the target language and tend to occur consistently and systematically ([Gayo & Widodo, 2018](#)). Understanding the distinction between errors and mistakes is crucial for identifying areas where learners need more support and targeted instruction.

## METHODS

### 3.1. Research Approach and Method

This research was designed by using a quantitative approach (Gay, Mills, & Airisan, 2012) stated that “Quantitative research is the collection analysis of numerical data to explain, predict, and/or control phenomena of interest.” The purpose of the research is to gain information about phenomena to describe an existing condition in the field.

The design of this research is descriptive quantitative research. Descriptive research is also called survey research which collected numerical data to answer the question about the correct status of the subject of the study. Gay, Mills, & Airisan (2012) stated that descriptive research is survey research. This research involves collecting data to find out the students’ perception of writing a descriptive text and find out the errors that the respondents made in writing a descriptive text.

Besides, (Cresswell, 2012) stated that survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population.

Furthermore, the researcher employed a writing test and surface technique taxonomy (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982) to extract further information about the sorts of student's errors of the simple present tense in writing descriptive text. There are errors such as omission, addition, misformation, and misordering. In addition, to obtain percentages of the most common errors made by students when writing descriptive text, we used (Sudijono, 2004) as follows:

$$\frac{F}{N} 100\%$$

Note:

F: Number of the subcategory error

N: Total of all categories error

X: The error of percentage

Research Object and Data

The second-semester 10th-grade students of SMK Pembangunan Nasional Bekasi are approached to be the respondents; the simple present tense and descriptive text is the object of this research. There are seven classes of 10th-grade students in SMK Pembangunan Nasional Bekasi, which consists of three majors. There are TKJ, AP and TKR. The population of this research is the 10th grade of SMK Pembangunan Nasional Bekasi with a total number of students are 198 students. Arikunto (2006) states that the sample is representative of part of the population. In addition, she states if the total population is less than 100, it is recommended to take the entire sample under the research, but if the populations involve more than 100, it is enough to take sample 10-15% or 20- 55% or more depending on the situation. In this case, the researcher would take 10% of the population as a sample, so the sample of this research is  $10\% \times 198 = 19,8$  and rounded to 20 students.

The students are given a questionnaire and a writing task to conduct the research. This research used a rating scale format in closed-ended question type to measure agreement due to these considerations: limited time and resources, the importance of

efficiency, many respondents are familiar with the format, preferred for non-dichotomous data, and concerns the wording, anchor points, and how to set the generated data (Harlacher, 2016).

### 3.2. Data Collection Technique

The students are given a descriptive writing test, and they have to write about their parents as a predetermined topic in three paragraphs with an allocated time of 60 minutes. The purpose is to find out the error and the most common error that they make.

We Also asked students to fill in the questionnaire. The purpose is to find out the data about their perception in writing a descriptive text. There are 2 sections provided the questionnaire consisting of the student's profile section and the questions section which consists of 12 questions about grammar, vocabulary, organization, content, and mechanic as the aspect of writing.

### 3.3. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis is an important part of conducting research. In analyzing the data, the descriptive quantitative technique is using the procedures in administering the test as follows:

3.3.1. Identifying the student's writing

3.3.2. Classifying the error, each error is classified as Omission, Addition, Misformation, and Misordering.

3.3.3. Find out the dominant types of errors made by students to obtain the percentage of the data. The formula based on Sudijono's formula (2004, p. 43) is as follows:

$$= \frac{F}{N} 100\%$$

Note:

F: Number of the subcategory error

N: Total of all categories error

X: The error of percentage

### 3.4. The Likert Scale

The Likert scale, is a psychometric response scale primarily used in questionnaires to obtain participants 'preferences or degrees of agreement with a statement or set of statements. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a given statement by way of an ordinal scale which consists of.

SD: Strongly Disagree (1)

D: Disagree (2)

N: Neutral (3)

A: Agree (4)

SA: Strongly Agree (5)

To analyze the data we used tabulating to arrange for processing data, also for getting the data better for systematic process and making percentages. Then calculate the total

number and percentage of each student's perception based on the result of the questionnaire given to them, by using (Sudijono, 2004) as follows:

$$x = \frac{F}{N} 100\%$$

Note:

F: Actual Frequency Count

N: Number of All Responses

X: Percentage

## RESULTS

According to the data presented in table below , we discovered that the total number of errors made by the students is 113 for each type of error. It shows that there were 55 occurrences of omission error, 11 occurrences of addition error, 35 occurrences of misformation error, and 12 occurrences of the misordering error.

Table 1. The Student's Type of Error

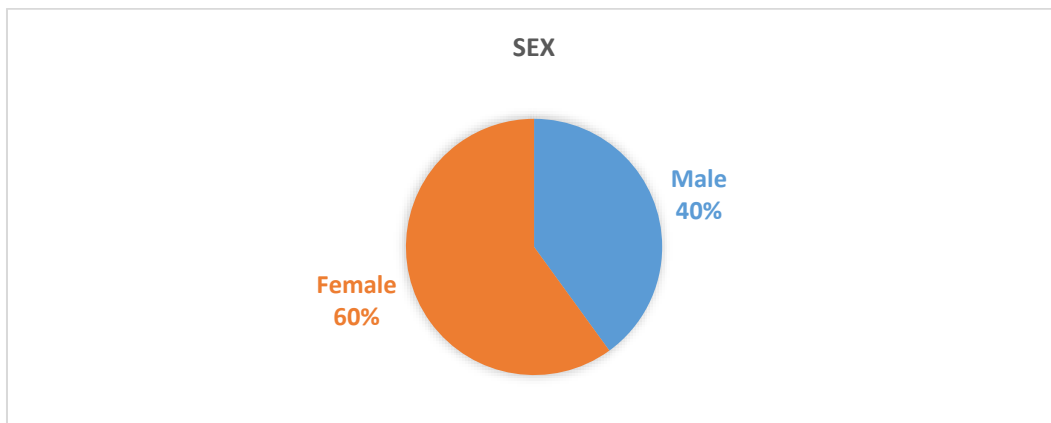
No	Initial Name	Types of Error				Total Error
		Omission	Addition	Misformation	Misordering	
1	CNA	5		2	2	9
2	CM	2		1	1	4
3	IJK	2		1		3
4	MS	5	3	3		11
5	DFH	1	1	2		4
6	LWS	3		3	1	7
7	R	3	1	1	2	7
8	FF	6	1	2		9
9	TC	7	1	5	3	16
10	RA	1	1			2
11	F	5	1	2	1	9
12	FH	4	1	5		10
13	AF	3	1			4
14	AM	1				1
15	ASS			3		3
16	NSF	3				3
17	NR			1	1	2
18	G	1		2	1	4
19	J	1				1
20	RG	2		2		4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>113</b>

The next step, which comes after determining which errors were made by students, is to compute the percentage of all of the different kinds of errors that have been made to determine which kind of error happens the most frequently. Table number 2 will display the percentage of each error as well as the error that occurs the most frequently.

**Table 2. Percentage of Error**

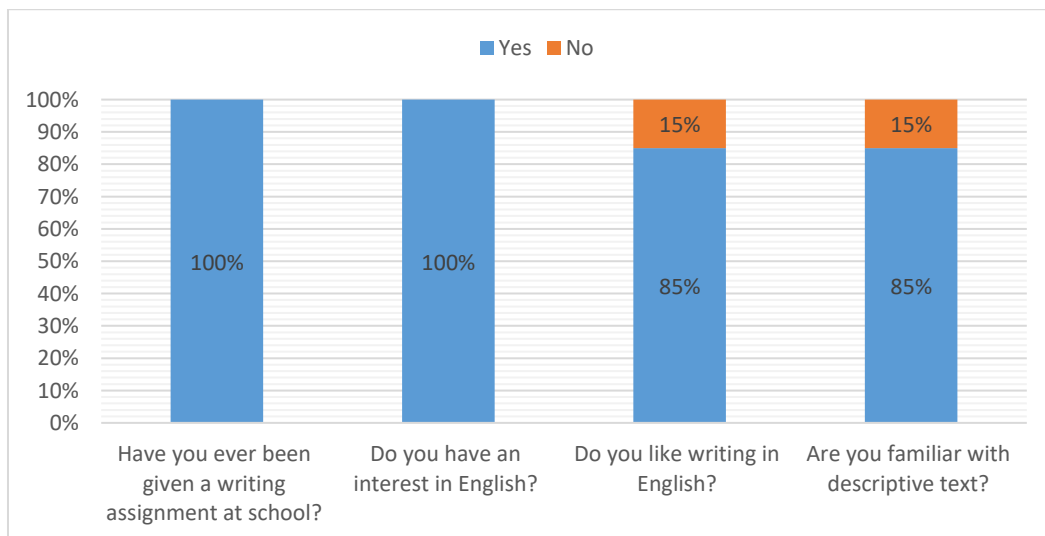
No	Type of Error	Total	Percentage
1	Omission	55	49%
2	Addition	11	10%
3	Misformation	35	31%
4	Misordering	12	11%
<b>Total</b>		<b>113</b>	<b>100%</b>

According to table 2 above, the most common error is omission (49%) with a total error of 55, followed by misformation (31%) with a total error of 35, addition (10%) with a total error of 11, and misordering (11%) with a total error of 12.



**Figure 1. The Respondent's Sex**

20 students responded, with 8 males (40%) and 12 females (60%). This section of the questionnaire is made up of closed-ended questions in the form of four questions. In this section, we will map out the students' profiles concerning their experience of writing descriptive texts to better understand them.



**Figure 2. The Respondents Profile**



Every student who is enrolled in a class is expected to complete at least one writing assignment during their time there. This demonstrates that all of the students have been tasked with writing the descriptive text for their various assignments. Everyone in the class has a positive attitude toward improving their command of the English language. On the other hand, only 15% of students report that they find writing in English to be a chore, while the remaining 85% of students are reporting that writing in English is something they look forward to. In addition, some students are familiar with descriptive text, who make up 85% of the students, while the remaining 15% of students are unfamiliar with descriptive text.

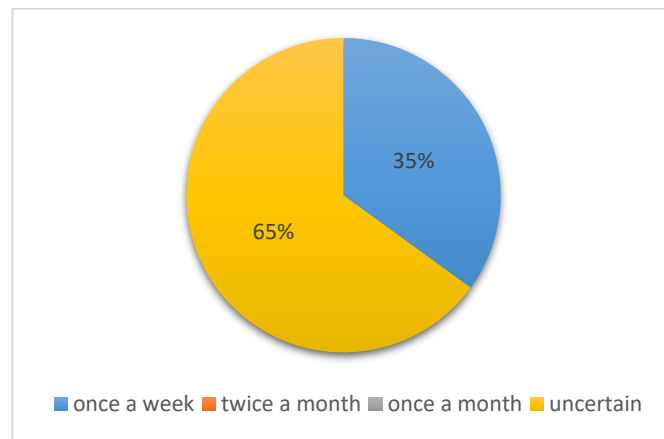


Figure 3. Frequency of the Students Writing Assignment

The question of how frequently students are required to complete a writing assignment at school is separated into four distinct categories, as shown in figure 4.3, which can see above. These categories are as follows: once a week, twice a month, once a month, and the frequency is uncertain. Only 35% of students turn in their writing assignments weekly, whereas 65% of students are unsure about their submission frequency.

Table 3. Data Collection with Likert scale

Questions	1	2	3	4	5
It is easier to write a descriptive text based on our own experiences	1	0	10	8	1
	5%	0%	50%	40%	5%
A descriptive text usually uses simple present tense.	0	0	12	7	1
	0%	0%	60%	35%	5%
I know the characteristics of a descriptive text.	1	1	14	4	0
	5%	5%	70%	20%	0%
I know the purpose of descriptive text	0	2	14	4	0
	0%	10%	70%	20%	0%
I know some generic structures when writing a descriptive text	0	0	17	3	0
	0%	0%	85%	15%	0%
It is difficult to use simple present tense due to lack of grammatical knowledge.	1	11	5	2	1
	5%	55%	25%	10%	5%
	1	13	0	5	1



It is difficult to write a descriptive text because I face a lack of vocabulary.	5%	65%	0%	25%	5%
It is difficult to organize the ideas in writing a descriptive text.	0	13	3	4	0
	0%	65%	15%	20%	0%
It is difficult to develop the ideas to bring all the information together.	0	13	5	2	0
	0%	65%	25%	10%	0%
It is difficult to use the punctuation properly in writing.	0	15	4	1	0
	0%	75%	20%	5%	0%
I often misspell words and use incorrect capitalization.	1	5	5	3	6
	5%	25%	25%	15%	30%
It is hard to write in English without searching the meaning in dictionary.	0	10	6	4	0
	0%	50%	30%	20%	0%

The first question is about the convenience of writing a descriptive text based on their experience. The result of the questionnaire is that most students answer neutrally and strongly agree with the statement. In the writing test, a few students make a descriptive text without the topic which has been specified, but most students use the correct topic in the writing test.

The second question is a descriptive text that usually uses a simple present tense. The result of the questionnaire is that most students choose neutral as their answer, which means they neither agree nor disagree with the statement, this is related to the writing test of students that we still found some sentences in the incorrect form of simple present tense.

The third question is that most students choose neutral as their answer, which means that they are in the middle of a position regarding whether they know the characteristics of a descriptive text or not. This is related to the result of the writing test. Most students only write two or three sentences in one paragraph, whereas one of the characteristics of a descriptive text is that in one paragraph there should be at least four sentences or more, with a connection between them.

The fourth question is asking about their knowledge of the purpose of the descriptive text. The result shows most of them chose neutral, and it's related to the results of the writing test, that most of them are describing, representing, and revealing an object correctly.

The fifth questions are a result, the majority of students choose neutral, while the remainder choose to agree, which is consistent with the results of the writing test, which revealed that the majority of students used the generic structure on their writing task.

The sixth question is about the difficulty of using simple present tense due to a lack of grammatical knowledge. Most students' answers disagree with this statement. This is related to the result of the writing test because most of them know the structure form of the simple present tense, even though they still make some errors.

Seven questions are about the difficulty of writing a descriptive text because of a lack of vocabulary. The result of the questionnaire shows most of the students disagree with this statement. This is unrelated to the result of the writing test because the researchers still found the same variety of words in their writing task.

The eighth question is about the difficulty of organizing ideas in writing a descriptive text. The result of the questionnaire shows most of the students disagree with this

statement. This is not in line with the result of a writing test, because most students are writing with unorganized ideas in a paragraph.

The nine questions are about the difficulty of developing ideas to bring all the information together. The result of the questionnaire shows most of the students disagree with this statement. This is not in line with the result of the writing test, because most students are not describing the details of the topic of the writing test. They are just describing the topic in general, which means they still have difficulty developing the ideas.

The tenth question is about the difficulty to use punctuation properly in writing. The result of the questionnaire shows most students disagree with this statement. This is not in line with the result of the writing test, because we still found a lot of incorrect punctuation.

Eleven questions are about misspelled words and using incorrect capitalization. The result of the questionnaire shows most students strongly agree with the statement. This is in line with the result of the writing test because we discover they are still making mistakes in spelling and using incorrect capitalization.

The last question is about the difficulty of writing in English without searching for the meaning in a dictionary. The result of the questionnaire shows most students disagree with the statement. This is not in line with the result of the writing test, because they are still making misspelled words in their writing tests. This means that they do not know the correct translation of the word that they want to write.

## DISCUSSION

The research findings reveal that students made four types of errors in their descriptive text writing: Omission, Addition, Misformation, and Misordering. Among these, omission was the most common, accounting for 49% of errors, followed by misformation at 31%, misordering at 11%, and addition at 10%.

Based on responses to the questionnaire, the majority of students selected neutral answers, indicating uncertainty about their ability and knowledge in writing descriptive texts. Additionally, most students disagreed with statements about barriers to writing, suggesting a lack of awareness of the challenges they face. Comparing the results of the writing test and the questionnaire, it is evident that students continue to encounter difficulties in writing descriptive texts, as reflected in the errors they made.

An analysis of errors in using the simple present tense shows that these mistakes stem from grammatical issues. Many students produced incorrect sentence structures due to interference from their native language, Bahasa Indonesia. Instead of constructing sentences based on English grammatical rules, students often directly translated from Bahasa without considering proper syntax. This habit leads to frequent errors, highlighting their struggle to produce grammatically accurate sentences in English.

## CONCLUSION

Since grammar plays a crucial role in writing, teachers must address this issue to help students minimize errors. Providing ample writing exercises can enhance students' skills, particularly when coupled with constructive feedback and one-on-one consultations. Teachers should focus on guiding students through their grammatical mistakes and offering specific suggestions for improvement. This process encourages

students to identify and correct their errors, ultimately fostering their ability to produce grammatically accurate sentences. With consistent practice and feedback, students can significantly reduce their writing errors over time. Students, on their part, should pay close attention to grammar while writing, as it is not only about conveying ideas but also about presenting them in a grammatically correct and polished manner. While focusing on content is important, neglecting grammar can undermine the overall quality of their writing. Besides relying on teacher feedback, students should actively engage in self-correction, as it helps them take ownership of their learning process. Teachers may not always address every single mistake, so students must develop the ability to identify and correct their errors independently. Even in vocational schools, where practical skills are often emphasized, both teachers and students should recognize the importance of mastering English. As a global language, proficiency in English will be invaluable for students as they transition from school to the workplace. Strengthening their grammar and writing skills can provide a competitive advantage when seeking employment or advancing in their careers.

#### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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