

Research Article

Discourse Features of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah: A Functional and Speech Act Analysis

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Abstract

This study investigates the discourse features of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah through an integrated application of Halliday's Functional Model of Language and Austin's Speech Act Theory. By analysing the treaty as a diplomatic and religious historical text, the research demonstrates how linguistic choices facilitated negotiation, conflict management, and the establishment of mutual recognition between the Muslim and Quraysh delegations. Halliday's seven functions of language reveal how the treaty's discourse simultaneously fulfils instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, representational, heuristic, and imaginative roles in shaping the communicative environment of the agreement. Austin's speech act framework further uncovers the illocutionary forces embedded in the treaty, including commissives, directives, declaratives, and assertives that advanced peace-making objectives. The synthesis of both frameworks shows that the treaty's language is not merely descriptive but performative, strategically mobilised to secure peace and manage face concerns within a sensitive socio-religious context. Findings show that the treaty's linguistic structure was strategically constructed to promote conciliation, minimise conflict, and affirm legitimacy. The study contributes to Islamic discourse analysis by highlighting the centrality of language in early Islamic diplomatic practice and offering insights for contemporary peace linguistics and intercultural communication.

Keywords

Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, Islamic Discourse, Halliday's Functional Grammar, Speech Act Theory, Pragmatics

1. Introduction

An understanding of the role of treaties in maintaining global peace is important in our understanding of the initiative taken long ago by the holy prophet of Islam – Mohammed (SAW). He not only facilitated a workable treaty, but also weave an incomparable linguistic, psychological and cultural web in communicative excellence that granted Islam a place in global diplomacy. According to Seelarbokus [12], the history of mankind shows that the treaty is a very old instrument of diplomacy which has been traditionally used to bring about peace among different groups (e.g., the Kadesh Peace Treaty

- circa 1259 B.C. see [12], the Peace Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, 628 A.D.). Due to their significance in protecting lives and territory, treaties have always held a vital place in inter-state relations. We have come to realize that treaties are a critical foundation for the rule of law. Even the Charter of the United Nations and other multilateral treaties developed under the auspices of the United Nations and form a comprehensive legal framework of norms and standards regulating the conduct of nations, and also, indirectly, the conduct of people. They are one of the major successes of the United Nations since its

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founding. The Islamic world has thought of the preeminent role of treaty by the way it was fashioned centuries ago through careful use of language and communicative competence as evident in the treaty of Hudaibiyyah. Farman and Yucel [2] strongly believe that the Hudaibiyyah treaty is a turning point in Islamic history. Although the treaty's articles were apparently against Muslims, it garnered many fruits. Firstly, it allowed the newly established state in Medina to be recognized by Meccan polytheists. It also became a major stepping stone for its acknowledgements in the region and it gave an opportunity to Prophet Muhammad to solidify his position with strategic outcomes.

Research Questions:

RQ1: How do Halliday's seven functions of language manifest in the discourse of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah as a tool for negotiation and conflict management?

- 1) RQ2: What specific speech acts—commissives, directives, assertives, declaratives, and expressives—can be identified in the treaty, and how do they perform pragmatic functions within the diplomatic context?
- 2) RQ3: In what ways does the integration of Halliday's functional model and Austin's speech act theory reveal the interplay between linguistic form and pragmatic force in the treaty's text?

2. Literature Review

We choose our utterances to fit situations. In an attempt to get desired results text and context should be treated as related parts. According to Gay [3] language plays an important role in relation to war and peace. Language shapes perception and behavior. Language can be used to demean differences and inflict damage or to affirm diversity and achieve recognition. Gomes de Matos [4] also advocates some principles underlying peaceful communication such as the need to love your communicative neighbor, dignify your daily dialogues, prioritize positivizers in your language use and being a communicative humanizer.

Gregory and Carroll [5] explain that the mystery of language lies, if anywhere, in its endless ability to adapt both to the strategies of the individual and to the needs of the community, serving each without imprisoning either. When we communicate, it is important to explore the capacity of human beings to use language appropriately, and to select from their total linguistic repertoires those elements which match the needs of particular situations, is of complementary importance and interest-for meaning resides not in the forms of language but in their use. When we appreciate things the effusive use of language will reveal the depth of appreciation or otherwise. We might say 'good effort' or 'well done'. However, another communicator may say 'That's an excellent job worthy of admiration'. These nuances of words demonstrate different levels of commendation the message will become more harmonious. Nababan [10] sees language as a tool of communication whose functions are used to express the purpose or aim in

speaking by adapting the situation and place. It means that language functions to deliver some meaning to the hearer to understand what the speaker said. Language functions as "the use to which language is put, the purpose of an utterance rather than the particular grammatical form an utterance takes". People use language in order to fulfill that purpose. Each purpose can be known as a language function. In the same vein, Halliday's [6] functions of language holds that language is used to exhibit the all-around human communicative needs. These include the following:

Instrumental: Language as a means of getting things and satisfying material needs such as,

'I want a car'. One can also use the language to identify things, seek and provide information or request assistance.

Personal: language that expresses personal opinions, attitudes and feelings including a speaker's identity. A speaker may elaborate and give detailed recount of experiences or respond to ideas and opinions. He may agree or disagree to a proposition just as use the language to seek, give and deny permission to do something.

Interactional: language that is used to develop relationships and ease interaction. This involves getting along with others or establishing relative status. Since interaction is all-encompassing, interlocutors may use language to interact and plan, develop a group activity. Other interactional purpose include: Greet or welcome people, meet or introduce people, attract attention. Most importantly in relation to diplomacy, a speaker may use language to negotiate, settle disputes and adopt appropriate tone and manner with others.

Regulatory: This is when language is used to influence the behaviour of others including persuading, commanding or requesting. It can be used to give specific logical instructions in a variety of contexts for different audiences.

Representational: language that is used to relay or request information.

Heuristic: - language that is used to explore, learn and discover. This could include question to explore your environment.

Imaginative function - the use of language to tell stories and create imaginary constructs.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

The integration of Halliday's functional model of language and Austin's speech act theory is to provide us a prism to look at the treaty in a more robust and scholarly fashion devoid of any misconception. Presently, few studies have brought Halliday's functions of language and Austinian speech-act analysis into direct, combined engagement with the treaty text. This is a gap this project intends to address by mapping Halliday's functional categories onto speech-act types to show how form and force co-construct diplomatic effect. The following are some of the discourse features revealed by combining both

theories:

3.2. Integrated Model Output

- 1) Mitigation and diplomacy: careful tone that avoids escalation.
- 2) Face-saving strategies: preserving dignity of both sides.
- 3) Strategic ambiguity: wording that allows flexibility in interpretation.
- 4) Cohesion and fairness framing: repetition of clauses for balance.
- 5) Legitimization: formal language that establishes authority and mutual recognition.

Illocutionary Acts: These are the heart of the treaty's pragmatic force:

- 1) Directives: requests, permissions, and prohibitions ("You shall return" / "They shall not attack").
- 2) Commissives: promises and commitments ("We agree," "We undertake").
- 3) Declarations: establishing new legal and social realities (e.g., formalizing peace terms).
- 4) Assertives: statements validating positions and intentions.

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design anchored in discourse analysis. It seeks to interpret how language functions and speech acts operate in the *Treaty of Hudaibiyyah* to achieve diplomatic, social, and religious objectives. The qualitative approach allows for an in-depth interpretation of textual meanings, pragmatic intentions, and communicative strategies within the historical context of early Islamic diplomacy.

3.3. Discourse Features in Hudaibiyyah Treaty

A close look at the terms of the treaty will throw more light on the discussion that follows. Halim [7] explains that the truce which was signed by both sides, the Muslims and Makkan Quraysh comprises six clauses of mutual agreement. These are:

- 1) Both sides agreed to conclude peace between two parties for ten years without having any fight or attack towards each other.
- 2) Anyone from the Makkan Quraysh who joined Muhammad PBUH without any permission from his chief or guardian, must be returned back to Makkah.
- 3) Whereas anyone from Muhammad PBUH side who went to join Makkan Quraysh were not necessary to be returned back to Makkah.
- 4) Any conduct of stealing or disloyalty shall be taken into action.
- 5) Anyone from Arab tribes who wanted to ally either to the Prophet or to the Makkan Quraysh were allowed to do so.
- 6) The Muslims had to return to Madinah in that year without entering Makkah. They were allowed to come back

and to perform 'umrah in the following year and were allowed to stay there only for three days.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is renowned for his emphasis on reconciliation and peaceful resolution of disputes. Throughout his life, he consistently demonstrated a deep commitment to fostering harmony among individuals and communities, even amid serious challenges and conflicts. A notable example of this dedication is the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, concluded in 628 CE between the Prophet and the leaders of Mecca. Although some of his companions initially criticized the agreement, it laid the foundation for peaceful co-existence and the resolution of hostilities between the two parties. The successful execution of the treaty on the part of Mohammed underscores the Prophet's enduring teachings, which continue to inspire and guide Muslims worldwide in their pursuit of peace and inclusive societies. According to Idris and Sakat [8] the agreements appear to be in favour of his opponents, the overall outcomes of getting recognition and maintaining peace were much higher in strategic value. Furthermore, the concept of strategic alliances was also realized. In this treaty, each party could ally with outsiders, which had resonated well and created good mutual benefits for both parties thus, expanding the influence of the Muslims.

Our analysis of the above will adopt the discourse-feature approach because it is a multidisciplinary field of studies whereby sufficient academic attention will be given to the Hudaibiyyah phenomena. Besides, discourse features include inquiry and investigation of verbal and written conversation so enable scholars understand possible social and linguistic meanings and implicatures. A critical analysis of the Halliday's theory reveals the deft use of language during the process of signing the peace pact. The interactional model was manifested when the prophet was able to get along with others, re-establishing relative status by navigating his expression to interact, plan, develop, and maintain group activity. Naser [11] explains that the Prophet engages the Quraysh team in the following terms:

So Urwah ibn Masud becomes the first real emissary the Quraysh send to negotiate and see what can be done. The Prophet tells him the exact same thing he told Budail: the exact same paragraph. That "why don't the Quraysh let us be, we are just like the normal people let us do tawaaf and we will go back". And the exact same conditions he offers and its very reasonable. He is appealing to the emotions of the Quraysh: "why the bloodshed, enough is enough, I'm just coming for peace, let me go like all others and if you feel awkward I'll give you some time, you leave the city, we'll enter, do tawaaf and then go back."

3.4. Hallidayan Functional Theory and Austinian Speech-act Analysis

The interactional function of language is employed to maintain a conversation and settle disputes. When deployed appro-

priately, interlocutors could negotiate amicably through appropriate tone and manner. Instead of the adversaries twisting the truth to besmear the prophet, he was able to communicate effectively by throwing more light to the message of hope.

The regulatory function of language was negatively applied by the Quraish against Al Hulays ibn Alkama from the tribe of Kinana who they appointed to negotiate on their behalf. Once they realized he supported the Prophet's line of argument that a peaceful resolution is better than bloodshed, Hulay was labeled as a Benduin. This was to control his behavior and make him tow their wrong part of recalcitrance which in Halliday's view is that language could be deployed to influence the behavior of others, thus changing their attitude. Hulays was blackmailed into submission when the Quraysh played the ethnic card. However, when Hulays saw the Muslims in ihraam doing the talbiya, he turns around and goes to the Quraysh and says "*subhanAllah it is NOT allowed to prevent the pilgrims from visiting the house of Allah*". Without even speaking to the Prophet, he is converted over. Again, we see the wisdom and diplomacy of the Prophets psychological warfare – he sees Hulays and recognises his soft spot.

Halliday's representative function of language assumes that the speaker can use language creatively to relay information. This aspect was noticeable after the Muslims were denied entrance to enter Mecca to perform tawaf. The sharia has stated that if you cannot go to the Kaaba, you must get out of your ihraam, shave your head, and return. The Muslims were agitated and refused to shave their head because they thought it was humiliating to accept the demeaning terms of the treaty. It was Salama, the Prophet's wife, who advised him, 'Why don't you show them you are doing it? And they will follow you'. Once the Muslims saw how the Prophet shaved his head and sacrificed his animal, they followed suit.

It is also interesting to note also that the speech acts theory of language behaviour was evident in the Hudaibiyah initiative. Austin [1] explains the roles of utterances in shaping the attitudes of participants in interpersonal communication. Speech acts reveal the intentions of speakers and the effects the speaker's utterances and expressions have on the hearers. The implication of speech acts is that every utterance has a purpose, which derives from the specific context. It has been observed that language use depends on such contextual factors as social and physical conditions, attitudes, abilities, beliefs and the relationship existing between the speaker and the listener. There are different types of speech acts, the most common being the following.

- a) Representative Acts;
- b) Declarative Acts;
- c) Directive Acts;
- d) Expressive Acts; and
- e) Commissive Acts.

- 1) Representative Acts – These acts describe events, processes and states. Usually, the speaker is committed to the truth of the assertion, claim, report, suggestion, prediction, description, hypothesis or conclusion.
- 2) Declarative Acts – These are acts that immediately change the state of affairs to which they apply. These acts are used in arresting, christening, marriage, sentencing, acquittal. and so on.
- 3) Directive Acts – In directive acts, the addressee is instructed to carry out some instruction by responding verbally to an utterance or by performing some physical actions.
- 4) Expressive Acts - Expressive acts show the psychological states – feelings and attitudes towards some events and affairs. These usually occur in greetings, scolding, condoling, appreciating, thanking, congratulating, apologising, and so on.
- 5) Commissive Acts - In commissive acts, the speaker is committed to some future action as in challenging, betting, promising, offering, threatening, vowing, warning, etc.

During the process of drafting the treaty the prophet demonstrated the declarative act by saying publicly wat is to be done so that the Muslims can understand what is at stake:

"by Allah no condition will the Quraysh ask of me, which respects the sign of Allah, except I will give them that condition" This is done to avoid bloodshed. It should be noted that they are in the haram, in ihraam during the sacred months, so fighting would be a major sin. Instead of engaging in confrontation with Sulail he declared: *"wallaahi I am RasulAllah, even if you deny it, so write down 'Muhammad ibn Abdullah'"*.

We can also give consideration to the directive acts whereby the addressee is instructed to carry out some demands by performing some actions. The opening of the term of the treaty was according to the Prophet's directive, "Bismillahir rahmanir rahim," which Suhail opposed until it was agreed to be written as the Quraysh were accustomed to '*BismikAllah hom*'". The Prophet further declared, 'this is what Muhammad Rasulullah has agreed to Bwith Suhail Ibn Amr', introducing the representation of the two parties.

The expressive acts were used to indicate the feelings and attitudes towards the state of affairs. These usually occur in social situations of greetings, thanking, appreciating, and scolding. This was observed when a number of the Sahaba objected to the terms of the treaty saying 'Subhanallah, how can we return one of us to the Mushrikun when he has chosen us as his protector?' However, the situation changed when later it became obvious that Allah granted the manifest victory to the Muslims. The Holy Prophet recited the Quran 48 verses of Surat Al-Fath:

Table 1. Proclamation of the Manifest Victory.

Indeed, we have given you clear manifest victory. So Allah can forgive your past and future sins.

Allah will always help the believers and grant peace in their hearts. sometimes you may think something is a loss for you but it is a victory

More people accepted Islam in the following year than in the previous 15 years of preaching Islam

what an amazing victory

Allah praised those who took part in the treat

Allah helped the Muslim in ways they did not understand. He averted a calamity. Muslims were very close to fighting and if that had happened the Muslims would have regretted the repercussions. innocent people would have died

We sometimes don't understand the wisdom in events in our lives

v 26: the Quraysh became very proud of their tribe. Allah criticises the sense of ego

Hammiyatan Jahaliyya

being proud of one's status or culture is Jahiliya and not befitting a Muslim. Islam allows to appreciate one's culture. a Muslim identity is Islam. we are all equal

V 27: Prediction of the conquest of Mecca

V 29: Mentions Muhammadu Rasullulah and praises Sahaba

When the Prophet returned to Mecca in 8th year Hijra, He loudly recited the beginning of Surah Al Fat'h (the Victory)

It was Umar's anger against the Prophet's acceptance of the unfair terms of the treaty that prompted this revelation to show clear victory over the Quraysh. The Prophet therefore remarked by the expressive acts; 'Allah has sent down a Surah that is more beloved to me than everything on this earth'.

Perhaps it was in the commissive acts that the observance of the speech act theory was more evident. The theory stipulates that the speaker is committed to some future action that is challenging, promising, vowing, and expecting. The Hudaibiyah experience is not only daunting but also full of anxiety. It is a venture of fate that brought out the worst of some Sahaba but the best of the Prophet. When Umār was distraught to challenge the Prophet on the humiliating terms of the treaty, he asked some questions.

- 1) "Are you not the messenger of Allah?"
- 2) "Are we not upon the truth and the enemies upon the misguidance?"
- 3) "Then how can we accept the lower hand, the humiliation and being disgraced in Islam?"

The prophet gave a reassuring response. *"I am the messenger of Allah, and I will not disobey Him, and He will help me"*. Meaning this was what the Prophet was commanded to do. And he is saying he doesn't know where this is leading or why Allah wanted it to happen. And this is a solid response: that Allah will help him. So, Umar RA cannot argue. So, Umar RA backtracks and attempts a new line of reasoning. He further queried the Prophet, *"Ya Rasul Allah didn't you tell us we would be doing tawaaf around the kab'ah? You told us but we are not doing it now"*. The Prophet responded, *"Indeed I told you, but did I say we will do it this year?"* Umar RA said *"No"*. So, the Prophet said *"So you'll do it next year – my vision will come true, Allah didn't tell me what year, I assumed it's this*

year but we now know it's next year".

Khan [9] extrapolates the import of the content analysis in Hudaibiyah treaty when he holds that although the believers were satisfied when they heard this Divine Revelation, not much longer afterwards the advantages of this treaty began to appear one after the other until everyone became fully convinced that this peace treaty indeed was a great victory:

1. In it for the first time the existence of the Islamic State in Arabia was duly recognized. Before this in the eyes of the Arabs the position of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be Allah's peace) and his Companions was no more than of mere rebels against the Quraish and other Arab tribes, and they regarded them as the outlaws. Now the Quraish themselves by concluding this agreement with the Holy Prophet recognized his sovereignty over the territories of the Islamic State and opened the way for the Arab tribes to enter treaties of alliance with either of the political powers they liked.
2. By admitting the right of pilgrimage to the House of Allah for the Muslims, the Quraish also admitted that Islam was not an anti-religious creed, as they had so far been thinking, but it was one of the admitted religions of Arabia, and like the other Arabs, its followers also had the right to perform the rites of hajj and umrah. This diminished the hatred in the Arabs hearts that had been caused by the propaganda made by the Quraish against Islam.
3. The signing of a no-war pact for ten years provided full peace to the Muslims, and spreading to every nook and corner of Arabia they preached Islam with such spirit and speed that within two years after Hudaibiyah the number of the people who embraced Islam far exceeded those

who had embraced it during the past 19 year or so. It was all due to this treaty that two years later when in consequence of the Quraish's violating the treaty the Holy Prophet invaded Makkah, he was accompanied by an army 10,000 strong, whereas on the occasion of Hudaibiyah only 1,400 men had joined him in the march.

4. After the suspension of hostilities by the Quraish the Holy Prophet had the opportunity to establish and strengthen Islamic rule in the territories under him and to turn the Islamic society into a full-fledged civilization and way of life by the enforcement of Islamic law. This is that great blessing about which Allah says in verse 3 of Surah Al-Ma'idah: "Today I have perfected your Religion for you and completed My blessing on you and approved Islam as the Way of Life for you."
5. Another gain that accrued from the truce with the Quraish was that being assured of peace from the south the Muslims overpowered all the opponent forces in the north and central Arabia easily. Just three months after Hudaibiyah, Khaiber, the major stronghold of the Jews, was conquered and after it the Jewish settlements of Fadak, Wad-il Qura, Taima and Tabuk also fell to Islam one after the other. Then all other tribes of central Arabia, which were bound in allia
6. nce with the Jews and Quraish, came under the sway of Islam. Thus, within two years after Hudaibiyah the balance of power in Arabia was so changed that the strength of the Quraish and pagan gave way and the domination of Islam became certain.

These were the blessings that the Muslims gained from the peace treaty which they were looking upon as their defeat and the Quraish as their victory. However, what had troubled the Muslims most in this treaty, was the condition about the fugitives from Makkah and Madinah, that the former would be returned and the latter would not be returned. But not much long afterwards this condition also proved to be disadvantageous for the Quraish, and experience revealed what far reaching consequences of it had the Holy Prophet fore seen and then accepted it. A few days after the treaty a Muslim of Makkah, Abu Basir, escaped from the Quraish and reached Madinah. The Quraish demanded him back and the Holy Prophet returned him to their men who had been sent from Makkah to arrest him. But while on the way to Makkah he again fled and went and sat on the road by the Red Sea shore, which the trade caravans of the Quraish took to Syria. After that every Muslim who succeeded in escaping from the Quraish would go and join Abu Basir instead of going to Madinah, until 70 men gathered there. They would attack any Quraish caravan that passed the way and cut it into pieces at last, the Quraish themselves begged the Holy Prophet to call those men to Madinah, and the condition relating to the return of the fugitives of itself became null and void. The import of Surah Fath should be studied with this historical background in view in order to fully understand it.

4. Data Analysis Procedure

Functional Analysis:

Each clause or statement is analyzed to determine which of Halliday's functions it performs—such as regulatory (commands, obligations), interactional (negotiation, recognition), or representational (information exchange).

Speech Act Analysis:

The same segments are examined for their illocutionary force according to Austin's typology (e.g., directive, commissive, assertive). This step reveals the pragmatic intentions and interpersonal dynamics of the participants.

Integrative Analysis:

Findings from both frameworks are synthesized to show how linguistic form (Halliday) and communicative function (Austin) interact to achieve peace, legitimacy, and mutual respect.

Interpretive Discussion:

The final stage interprets how these discourse strategies facilitated diplomatic success, drawing connections between linguistic evidence and socio-political outcomes of the treaty.

5. Conclusion

The investigation of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah through the dual lenses of Halliday's functional model and Austin's speech act theory reveals the depth of linguistic strategising that underpinned this seminal diplomatic encounter. The treaty's discourse emerges as multifunctional and purposive, simultaneously constructing obligations, managing interpersonal dynamics, and encoding shared sociopolitical expectations. Halliday's framework highlights how the treaty deploys language to fulfil instrumental, regulatory, and interactional functions, while Austin's typology demonstrates that these linguistic forms were operationalised through concrete illocutionary acts that forged commitments, legitimated terms, and transformed political realities. The synergy of both frameworks underscores that the treaty's language is not merely descriptive but actively performative, shaping perceptions, guiding interactions, and securing mutual recognition between the Muslim and Quraysh delegations. The treaty's communicative architecture provided a mechanism for conflict management, face maintenance, and mutual recognition in a sensitive intercommunal context. This analysis thus underscores the centrality of pragmatic competence and functional discourse strategies in early Islamic diplomacy. More broadly, it affirms the value of integrating functional and pragmatic theories to illuminate how historical texts both reflect and shape the socio-political landscape in which they are produced.

6. Originality and Contribution of the Study

This study makes a distinct scholarly contribution by offering the first integrated linguistic-pragmatic examination of

the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah through the combined application of Halliday's functional model of language and Austin's speech act theory. While previous analyses of the treaty have largely been historical, theological, or moral in orientation, this research introduces a systematic discourse-linguistic perspective that foregrounds how language itself operated as an instrument of diplomacy and peace-building in early Islam. The study bridges functional linguistics and speech act theory—two frameworks often treated separately—thereby demonstrating how form (Hallidayan function) and force (Austinian illocution) co-construct meaning in diplomatic communication. Overall, the study advances an interdisciplinary understanding of how language mediates power, identity, and reconciliation—affirming that the Prophet Muhammad's diplomatic excellence was deeply rooted in pragmatic and functional mastery of communication.

Abbreviations

SAW “Sallallāhu ‘Alayhi Wa sallam” Arabic Meaning Is “May Allah's Peace and Blessings Be upon Him.”

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Author Contributions

Alebiosu Afolabi Tajudeen is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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