The Structure of Metaphors in Students-Produced Fauna Texts

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DOI: 10.18355/XL.2026.19.02.19

Abstract
The aim of this research is to deepen and reveal the metaphorical structure in fauna texts. This research contributes to language development by forming a generation skilled in metaphorical diction across various contexts and broadens language students' insight into fauna while increasing their love for it. The main theories are Jensen et al (2021); Qiu et al (2022); Tampubolon & Sidabutar (2025); Liu, Li, & Feng (2025); Basarati & Kazemian (2026). The method used is content analysis. The research was conducted over 10 months with Indonesian Language and Literature Education students at Universitas Negeri Makassar. Data were analyzed using Lakoff & Johnson's (1980) theory, consisting of topic, vehicle, and ground. The results of the study showed the existence of 20 categories of two-word metaphors, 8 categories of three-word metaphors, and 15 categories of five-word metaphors. The metaphorical structure is dominant for the two-word category than for the others.
Key words: metaphor, fauna text, topic, vehicle, ground

Introduction

The beauty of the language in the text makes it an interesting piece to delve into, exploring how things can change human thought patterns to always do something that is beneficial both individually and in general. The text employs various diction, with appropriately placed metaphorical elements that reprmoesent visible phenomena, feelings, and ideas to convey the importance of something in the fauna text. Texts that develop by referring to certain objects are very different from other texts. This is due to the focus on specific aspects, so that the text's content, with a string of words, phrases, and sentences, is realized into paragraphs with deep meaning. Along with the rapid development of science and technology, humans are increasingly facing challenges, so they must be able to adapt appropriately without ignoring aspects that support human life. One of them is the use of fauna texts to care for and preserve fauna for the sustainability of the habitat. Therefore, fauna must always be well maintained and even protected by the state, as various types of rare fauna exist worldwide, especially if they are found only in Indonesia on certain islands. Physically, various types of fauna are still often found, both those kept by the community and found in zoos in Indonesia. To make the younger generation more sensitive to the existence of fauna, this is expressed in written texts through the right choice of diction, including elements of metaphor as a figure of speech. Writing fauna texts among students indirectly makes a significant contribution, as they can learn about Indonesian fauna and, at the same time, develop sensitivity to it. Moreover, in the current era, students must not only master certain competencies but also possess other knowledge that supports the sustainability of life. One fundamental aspect that is understood and receives attention is the existence of fauna. Fauna is not all known to the current generation, so efforts are needed to ensure it remains familiar to younger generations. Writing fauna texts among students is a challenge in itself because it requires basic knowledge of fauna. That is why fauna texts produced by students must be a special space for study, especially the metaphorical elements used in completing a writing.

Review of Literature

The term metaphor began to be introduced in the early 18th century (Ehren et al., 2022). Metaphor is one way of expressing something with different expressions in communicating both orally and in writing (Sekulak et al., 2022). Furthermore, metaphor is a basis for cognitive thinking as well as a means to know and reflect reality. The use of metaphor for the perception of semantic meaning that does not have other forms of symbolism at the conscious level shows high potential for the development of social intelligence. Scientists rely on metaphors and analogies to understand scientific phenomena and to communicate their findings to one another and to the public. However, despite their usefulness, metaphors can also limit scientific reasoning, contribute to public misunderstanding, and, at times, inadvertently reinforce stereotypes and messages that undermine the goals of inclusive science (Taylor & Dewsbury, 2018). In other concepts, the terms grammatical metaphor, conventional metaphor, and poetic metaphor are known which show that the evaluation of the nature of iconicity in language has implications for the general theory of language as a natural phenomenon (Hiraga, 1994). Linguistic metaphors influence the assessment of emotionally complex situations (Hendricks et al., 2018). On the other hand, Lakoff & Johnson (1980) stated that, in metaphor, there is a topic, a vehicle and a ground. New metaphors that better capture the dynamics of new social media users: windows, mirrors, doors, and playgrounds, can serve as ideas for teaching and learning (Reinhardt, 2020). Metaphors have socio-political implications and disciplinary effects, and language is key to communicating important messages that improve human well-being (Escobedo et al., 2019). Metaphors shape attitudes and reasoning, elucidating several cognitive, affective, and social forces that moderate their efficacy in decision-making. Ultimately, complex metaphors are termed dynamic in communication and cognition (Thibodeau et al., 2019). On the other hand, when someone is in an emotional state, metaphors are sometimes used in accordance with their thoughts (Qiu et al., 2022). Metaphors are not only related to non-literal elements of language but also to inherent ways of interpreting something (Jensen et al., 2021).

Metaphor theory from a broad perspective is called conventional metaphor (van Poppel, 2020). The scope of conceptual metaphors in metaphorical thinking, comparisons, and similes is both directly and indirectly expressed in language through lexical items. Indirect and conventional metaphors depend on the context of their use. A similar opinion states that the ability to use metaphors strategically is key to communicative competence (Littlemore & Fielden-Burns, 2023). Metaphors are recognized for their necessity in constructing reality and interacting in life using metaphors (Ehren et al., 2022). In fact, metaphors are not only a property of language but also a powerful mental model for understanding the world. This perspective on metaphor as a cognitive phenomenon has been further expanded in conceptual metaphor theory and critical metaphor analysis, bringing a sociological perspective to understand how metaphors function as 'discursive manifestations of internalized social structures.' The affirmation of conceptual metaphors (Sekulak et al., 2022) holds that metaphors allow one to relate to complex concepts in uncertain situations. From a cognitive perspective, metaphors influence how we understand, define, and experience abstract concepts by highlighting some features and properties while deemphasizing others.

Sometimes, humans perceive an opportunity as crucial in conceptualizing it. Another characteristic of metaphor, highly relevant in the context of academic writing, is its intertextual nature. Scientific texts build on and derive their meaning from previous work, including metaphors. Metaphors have become so important that they are considered markers of entire fields or intellectual traditions (Carraro, 2023). Basarati & Kazemian (2026) argue that metaphor is the conceptualization of something as an

object of control. Liu, Li, & Feng (2025) state that in interpreting metaphors, analysis can focus on interpreting similarities or differences across languages, especially regarding specific topics in the text. Metaphor is one way to express human thought and language (Djuraeva, 2025). Metaphor is also stated by Tampubolon & Sidabutar (2025), who emphasize that grammatical metaphors function as strategic tools to improve students' academic writing skills. This aligns with Jin et al.'s (2025) view that metaphors are an effective way for individuals to express their thoughts about abstract concepts that are difficult to convey otherwise. Philip (2005) emphasized the role of metaphors in producing speech and writing as part of linguistics. Tianying & Bogoyavlenskaya (2023) stated that culture influences the interpretation of metaphors. Shorabek et al. (2021) consider metaphors incapable of revealing a subject openly; metaphors only help to see it from a certain perspective.

Methods

This research design focuses on the expression of metaphors in fauna texts. This study, a descriptive qualitative study, was designed to address the problem of metaphor use in student-written fauna texts. The study took place at Universitas Negeri Makassar, South Sulawesi, Indonesia, and lasted for 10 months. The data sources were 210 Indonesian Language and Literature Education students actively attending lectures in the fourth semester, focusing on the same topic: writing fauna texts. The research data consisted of words, phrases, or sentences containing metaphors in the fauna texts. The data collection technique was documentation. The research instrument was given the task of writing fauna texts. The fauna texts were strictly selected, specifically those containing metaphors. Data obtained in the field were identified and tabulated. Data validity was checked using triangulation. The data was analyzed using Lakoff & Johnson theory, which includes the topic, vehicle, and ground, while also revealing their meaning.

Results and Discussion

The metaphorical structure in fauna texts has varied topics, vehicles, and grounds as text markers which show that these texts use diction that is used according to context.

Two-word metaphor

“Seperti **permata terbang**, cenderawasih menakjubkan dengan bulu-bulunya yang berwarna cerah dan unik.” “Like **a flying jewel**, the bird of paradise is stunning with its brightly colored and unique feathers.” (data 1)

The structure: the topic is the bird of paradise, the vehicle is the flying jewel, and the ground is something of high aesthetic value. The metaphor of flying jewels means beautiful and unique, as birds of paradise have something unique. Considered as a very valuable jewel because it is sparkling and valuable. Moreover, birds of paradise are something rare. With this, it is very necessary to maintain its existence so that, from generation to generation, we can witness the beauty of life in Indonesia firsthand. Moreover, the existence of birds of paradise as stated in the text, is in tropical forests, especially in the Papua region. Moreover, its main food is fruits and insects obtained from trees. Thus, it is natural that the bird of paradise is used as a symbol of pride for the Papua people in particular and the Indonesian people in general.

“Burung parkit adalah burung bertubuh kecil dan masih berkerabat dengan burung betet. Warna bulunya sangat khas yang membuat **hatiku berbunga-bunga** dengan perpaduan aneka warna hijau, kuning, biru, putih, ungu, dan orange.” “Parakeets are small birds and are related to parrots. Their feather colors are very distinctive and make **my heart bloom** with a combination of various colors of green, yellow, blue, white, purple, and orange.” (data 2)

The topic is parakeets; the vehicle is my heart in bloom; the ground is the unique value of other birds. The metaphor of **my heart in bloom** means there is a feeling of joy because of witnessing the various colors of green, yellow, blue, white, purple, and orange feathers, even in a small cage. Of course, it would be even better if the parakeet were in the wild. Furthermore, the metaphor of light in my life is considered something that illuminates the life of its owner. That is why, sometimes found in society for parakeet lovers do not feel at home if they leave the area. In their minds, what is often thought about is the care of the bird that is left behind, food, drink, security, and even interacting, even though it is only in the form of bird movements. Parakeets are very caring toward their partners. Thus, someone who keeps parakeets must always give attention to keep them tame. If it feels comfortable, even if the parakeet opens its cage accidentally, it will still faithfully wait for its master. Moreover, if the female parakeet is laying eggs, then loyalty is increasingly shown not only to its owner, but also to the opposite sex.

“Warna kaki mereka juga sangat bervariasi dan ada juga yang berwarna terang seperti merah atau merah walaupun bebek-bebek tersebut dilepasliarkan namun ketika **dewi malam** tiba semua bebek harus kembali ke kandangnya.” "The color of their feet also varies greatly and there are also bright colors such as red or red, although the ducks are released when **the goddess of night** arrives, all the ducks must return to their cages." (data 3)

The text, the topic is duck, the vehicle is the goddess of the night, ground is implicitly the end of the activity. The metaphor of **the goddess of the night** suggests that the moon signals the return of ducks to their pens at night, especially when the moonlight is visible. The next metaphor, going bankrupt, means that the business that was pioneered experienced changes that were not as expected, so that, in general, people who experience this choose to close their business. If you look closely at the text, it turns out that ducks are easier to breed and are not too troublesome for their owners because their food range is only around the yard. Even though they fly away occasionally, they still come back.

“Biasanya ayam kampung dijadikan peliharaan untuk diadu ataupun dijual, makanya kebanyakan orang merawat dan membesarkan ayam kampung seperti ‘**buah hati’** sendiri, terkhusus ayam betina, mereka nantinya hanya akan di jual atau berakhir di makan. Ayam kampung sebenarnya ‘sebelas dua belas’ dengan jenis ayam lainnya, hanya saja berbeda habitat untuk hidup.” "Free-range chickens are usually kept as pets for fighting or for sale. That's why most people raise and raise them like their **own children**, especially hens. They'll eventually be sold or eaten. Free-range chickens are actually very similar to other chickens, just in a different habitat." (data 4)

The topic is free-range chicken, the vehicle is children, ground is love. The metaphor of 'fruit of the heart', which means people in rural areas, some of whom keep and raise native chickens as they care for their own children. That is why it is very common to find people who pay close attention to raising chickens. Another metaphor, 'eleven twelve', which means that native chickens are actually almost the same as other chickens. Only in terms of feathers, of course, they have various colors of feathers. In addition, in terms of selling value, native chickens are considered to be more expensive than other chickens. Moreover, if the rooster has a distinctive voice. It is not surprising that almost every household in rural areas keeps native chickens. As is the case in the metaphor of 'knee capital', which means minimal capital, but really helps the economy of the local community. Sometimes in the metaphor of a particular chicken, it is said to be the 'golden child' with the intention of making its owner feel

happy to win, for example, in a competition. The term free-range chicken actually means that chickens kept in rural areas come in various colors, especially the distinctive sounds of male chickens, which are unique to each region. Even the sound of chickens is often used as a time signal for people in rural areas who do not wear watches. That is why the sound of chickens at night, early morning, and dawn is very echoing and melodious in the countryside.

“Penikmat ikan nila sudah paham bahwa ikan ini mempunyai tulang yang halus dan kecil yang bisa tersangkut di tenggorokan jika tidak hati-hati saat memakannya. Atau bagi mereka yang pernah mencoba mengolahnya, tentu mengetahui bahwa ikan ini memiliki sirip yang sangat tajam di bagian atasnya yang dapat **‘merobek tangan’** dengan mudahnya jika tak berhati-hati dalam memegangnya.” "Tilapia lovers already know that this fish has fine and small bones that can get stuck in the throat if you are not careful when eating it. Or for those who have tried to process it, of course they know that this fish has very sharp fins on the top that can **'tearing the hand'** easily if you are not careful when holding it." (data 5)
The topic is tilapia fish lovers, the vehicle is tearing hands, and the ground is tilapia fish promotion. The metaphor of **'tearing the hand'** consists of two words, namely 'tearing' and 'hand'. The term tearing is not related to cloth, clothes or mats but the term tearing means injuring the hand. A statement with the intention that tilapia that are deliberately kept in a pond are certainly very different because their movement is very limited and there is potential for fish stress. There must be caution when holding this, as there are various thorny, sharp fins, and if they come into contact with the hand, they can cause pain. Some people like to eat tilapia, but some people are allergic to it.

“Orang yang tahu diri adalah orang yang sadar diri bahwa dirinya harus bekerja untuk bisa bertahan hidup. Semut itu mahluk yang sangat kecil dan biasanya menjadi santapan trenggiling. Sadar bahwa dirinya kecil tidak membuat seekor semut berdiam diri saja, pasrah. Justru sebaliknya dirinya adalah pekerja keras dan ‘**tahan banting’**.*”* *“*A self-aware person is a person who is aware that he must work to survive. Ants are very small creatures and are usually eaten by pangolins. Realizing that he is small does not make an ant just stay silent, resigned. On the contrary, he is a hard worker and *‘***resilient’**.*”* (data 6)
The topic is ants; the vehicle is resilience; the ground is keep trying. The metaphor of 'resilient' means that efforts are made with hard work. This metaphor describes ants as having the strength to face obstacles, even though they are small, and as trying to find food and bring it back. Good cooperation goes hand in hand with reaching a certain goal. In terms of life, of course, it provides a lesson that can be applied, that cooperation in terms of goodness with good intentions is very much needed. Sometimes in opposite directions, but togetherness is maintained and does not interfere with each other on the journey.

“Keseharian dari hewan ini yaitu mengitari bunga-bunga dengan sayap cantiknya dengan ‘**gerak tari’**. Tidak heran kalau kupu-kupu memberi gagasan manusia dalam menciptakan gerak tari.” "The daily activity of this animal is to circle flowers with its beautiful wings with **'dance movements'**. It is not surprising that butterflies give humans ideas for creating dance movements." (data 7)
The topic is butterflies, the vehicle is dance movements, and the ground is the unique attraction of butterflies. The metaphor of **'dance movements'** suggests that the butterfly does not just sit directly on the flower but circles it with beautiful wing movements. This shows something that is aimed at, even though it is in front of the eyes, it still behaves well.

“Kalong dikenal sebagai hewan yang senang akan gelap gulita, ketika ‘**gelap gulita’** datang para kalong akan berterbangan ke sana ke mari.” "Balong are known as animals that like pitch darkness, when **'pitch darkness'** comes, the bats will fly here and there." (data 8)
Kalong as the topic, a vehicle in the form of a pitch-black pitch, and the ground looking for life at night. The metaphor of **'pitch darkness'** means a dark night with the intention that bats choose to survive at night, even during the day, which is considered their resting time. That is why, when bats fly at night to find life. The darker it is, the more the bats like it. With dark colors and a dark atmosphere, it maximizes its potential to find life because it is difficult for humans to see its existence due to the lack of light. In the text, there is also often a myth and for those who believe it, sometimes it is proven. If someone is accidentally exposed to bat droppings, then that person has the potential to get their heartthrob in that area. In the modern era, things like this have shifted because teenagers can meet in real life and can be done through cyberspace.

“Cicadidae merupakan serangga yang memiliki suara paling nyaring. Terkadang serangga ini bisa disebut sebagai serangga kecil-kecil *‘***cabe rawit’**.” "Cicadidae is an insect that has the loudest voice. Sometimes this insect can be called a small insect **'cayenne pepper'**." (data 9)
Cicadidae is the topic, vehicle is the hot pepper, and ground is the small thing that can do maximum. The metaphor of 'hot pepper' refers to the cicadas as small but strong insects, like small chilies. This shows that cicadas, despite their small bodies, have very loud voices. The text emphasizes that cicadas have loud voices because of the tymbals in their abdomens. There is a kind of membrane with moving muscles that cause vibrations that cause the sound to be heard loudly. The louder the male cicadas' voice, the more attracted the females are. This illustrates that in life, a person must have a unique attraction that is different from others.

Three-word metaphors
The three-word metaphor structure is also reflected in the text, which shows the use of special diction in a series of sentences.
“Angsa putih juga memiliki warna bulu yang seluruhnya **bagai kapas dibusur**. Bulu yang terdapat di tubuhnya berwarna putih dominan, tekstur lembur/halus dan sangat lunak serta memiliki tulang/batang bulu keras berwarna putih.” "The white goose also has a feather color that is entirely **like cotton in a bow**. The feathers on its body are predominantly white, the texture is soft/smooth and very soft and has a hard white feather bone/shaft." (data 10)
The text has a topic that is a swan, the vehicle is like cotton in a bow, and the ground is dominated by white. The metaphor, like cotton in a bow, means pure white with the meaning of the color of the white swan feathers. In fact, almost all the feathers found are white. In fact, swans in certain rural communities are used as house guards because if a stranger visits, they try to shout as loud as possible and even prevent them from entering the yard. It is also an animal that is easy to keep because its food can vary in the form of rice, bran, roots, stems, and leaves of aquatic plants and plants in water.

“Kucing tidak memakan segala sesuatu yang berhubungan dengan tumbuhan. Biasanya kami menirukan gerakannya seperti ‘**bermain kucing-kucingan’**.*”* “Cats do not eat anything related to plants. Usually we imitate their movements like **‘playing cat and mouse’.***”* (data 11)
The topic is cats, the vehicle is playing cat and mouse, and the ground is human behavior that often imitates cat movements. The metaphor of **playing cat and mouse**

means someone who acts like a cat. Fighting over food or objects in front of them. The text describes that cats are animals that are often kept by people, so they become tame and comfortable living in the house. Unlike wild cats, whose lives are uncertain so finding food also requires a struggle. It's just that it's often annoying because of the dirt that is often handed over. That's why, stray cats are often chased away by someone.

Five-word metaphors

Five-word metaphors are also found in fauna texts with varying topics, targets, and comparisons.

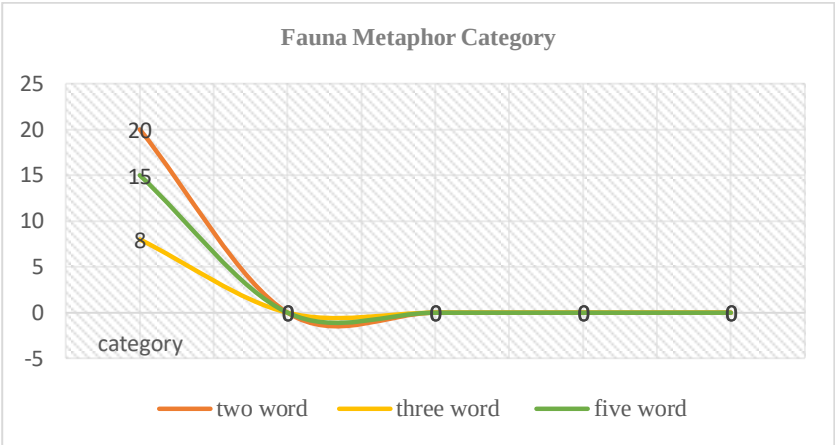
“Burung merpati adalah burung yang sangat indah dan unik. Siapa pun yang membeli atau memiliki burung merpati **tidak akan dibuat gigit jari**, karena selain harganya yang cukup terjangkau, burung merpati juga dipercaya bisa melancarkan rezeki dan membawa keberuntungan bagi pemilikinya.” " Pigeons are very beautiful and unique birds. Anyone who buys or owns a dove **will not bite their fingers**, because apart from being quite affordable, pigeons are also believed to be able to provide good fortune and bring good luck to their owners." (data 12)

The metaphorical structure of the text: The topic is pigeons, vehicle is not going to be made to bite your fingers, and ground is something that is fun and brings happiness. The metaphor **will not bite their fingers** consists of five words and is closely related which means it will not disappoint. The word bite your fingers is preceded by the word not indicating appropriate expectations. Conversely, if it stands alone without the word not, it means disappointing. In this case, something that is expected in life will certainly get happiness. In society, pigeons do not bother people too much because they are not complicated to keep, as they only need to provide a simple cage and will return by themselves without being looked for if they feel happy staying. Conversely, if they no longer feel comfortable, they fly away and never come back again. For some people, keeping pigeons is not only entertaining but also considered to bring fortune to their owners. That is why pigeon owners avoid cutting their pet pigeons because if they do, the pigeons have the potential to fly to another place and never come back. Pigeons are tame for their owners so they are easy to catch and hold to be fed directly while being entertained. Especially if there are children who also have a hobby of pigeons, it is certainly even more entertaining.

“Ayam biasanya keluar dari kandang saat **raja siang sudah menampakkan diri** dan akan masuk kembali kekandang ketika raja siang sudah bersembunyi.” "Chickens usually come out of the coop when **the day king has appeared** and will go back into the coop when the day king has hidden." (data 13)

The topic is chickens; the vehicle is the king of the day; and the ground is making the most of time in seeking fortune. The metaphor "**the king of the day has appeared**" means the sun has risen on the eastern horizon, so chickens generally must leave their cages to seek food for survival. When it rains, chickens typically run for shelter to avoid getting wet and try to hide their chicks as a form of protection from the rain and lurking dangers. Upon closer inspection, chickens are very sensitive to their young and constantly seek out food for them. This means that protection from various undesirable events is essential in life. This certainly suggests that humans can emulate chicken behavior, always being alert to those around them who need help. The following is a diagram of the fauna metaphor categories.

Diagram 1. Fauna Metaphor Category



Two-word metaphor category (20); three-word metaphor category (8); five-word metaphor category (15). The diagram shows that fauna text metaphors tend to be more dominant in the two-word category than in the three-word or five-word categories. This is because fauna texts have limited use of diction that colors fauna metaphors. Because of this, it is necessary to consistently understand fauna through appropriate diction choices so that metaphorical elements are reflected in the text. Disseminating information about fauna through text is crucial for the survival of fauna in Indonesia.

Discussion

The metaphorical structure in the fauna text, which includes the topic, vehicle, and ground, is very apparent in the series of sentences. The topic is generally about fauna and specifically wild and tame animals such as birds of paradise, doves, chickens, and ducks. The vehicle aspect is reflected in the disclosure in the text. Furthermore, the ground seems as if animals have similarities if they are done by humans. In the view of Lakoff & Johnson (1980), the metaphorical structure involves a topic, vehicle, and ground, something interrelated in order to reveal the implied meaning in the text. Taylor & Kidgell (2021) emphasize that the role of metaphor in an event is very important in building effective communication so that it can lead to changes in people's behavior. The metaphor of the fauna text can foster readers' impressions of the various types of fauna in Indonesia. The metaphorical structure of the fauna text is in the two-word, three-word, and five-word categories. The meaningfulness of the fauna text is important because it can arouse readers' feelings to explore it, especially with the presence of metaphorical elements in it. Of these various things, the tendency of metaphors that appear in the text is more dominant in the two-word category than in others. Furthermore, only a portion of the fauna text produced by students contains metaphorical elements. This is due to students' lack of knowledge and understanding of how to use metaphors and appropriate diction in writing. Therefore, students majoring in language should broaden their knowledge of fauna to develop a sense of the importance of preserving and conserving the world's fauna. Moreover, with the diversity of fauna whose habitat is decreasing day by day, it certainly requires serious attention from the younger generation, both through writing and directly protecting their habitat.

Conclusion

The metaphorical structure in the fauna text, in terms of topics related to wild and tame animals, the vehicle aspect is reflected in the disclosure in the text, and the ground as if animals have similarities if they are done by humans. Metaphors in the fauna text tend to use two words more dominantly than the three-word and five-word categories. In the fauna text, there is a limited use of diction that colors the metaphor. This is due to the limited knowledge of students regarding fauna in Indonesia in particular.

Declaration of AI use

We did not use AI to write this article. All content is our responsibility.

Acknowledgments

Thank you very much to the Rector of Universitas Negeri Makassar and the Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Literature, Universitas Negeri Makassar, for their support in writing this article. We also extend our thanks to the experts whose theories were used in this article.

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Words: 5532
Characters : 35 793 (20 standard pages)

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