



# Entering the discipline's world of academic argumentation: using *knowledge telling* and *knowledge transforming* to shed light on students' engagement with sources

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# Outline

- Background and aim of the study
- Data and method
- Reconceptualising *knowledge telling* and *knowledge transforming*
- Findings: Functions of source use on a horizontal and vertical continuum
- Implications for writing research and writing pedagogy

# Background

Your argumentation is unclear

What is your argumentation based on?

Argumentation as crucial feature in academic writing (Wingate, 2012)

- connected to the use of perspectives, theories and methods in the disciplinary field
  - **"putting the sources into a dialogue"** (McCambridge, 2019)

" ...imagine and position themselves as participants in a global scale disciplinary discussion, drawing on the voices of the field"  
(Teachers' statements in the study by McCambridge, 2019)

# Background

## Components of argumentation

- **the analysis and evaluation of content knowledge**
- **the writer's development of a position**
- the presentation of that position in a coherent manner

(Wingate, 2012, p. 146)

# Background

## Emerging disciplinary voices

**"One's own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible." (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345)**



# Aim of the study

to explore students' practices of using sources in their textual argumentation in their bachelor theses

*In what ways do students engage with sources, and what does this engagement reveal about their emerging disciplinary voices?*

# Data and methods

15 bachelor theses from the humanities

- 8 bachelor theses from English (5 from Cultural Studies, 3 from Literature)
- 7 bachelor theses from Media Studies

Methodological approach

- Exploratory, qualitative analysis
  - Reconceptualizing *knowledge telling* and *knowledge transforming* (well-known concepts from Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987)
  - Identifying sources and their functions (linked to sections and moves)

# *Knowledge telling and knowledge transforming*

Reconceptualization of *knowledge telling* and *knowledge transforming* (terms from Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987)

- Knowledge telling
  - Re-telling the source's words
  - Reproducing established knowledge
- Knowledge transforming
  - Actively engaging with the source's words
  - Using sources to develop own argument

see also Blåsjö, 2009; Petric, 2007



## Functions of source use

**Knowledge telling**

describe background

**Knowledge transforming**

interpret/discuss findings

**Present topic**

**Introduce theory**

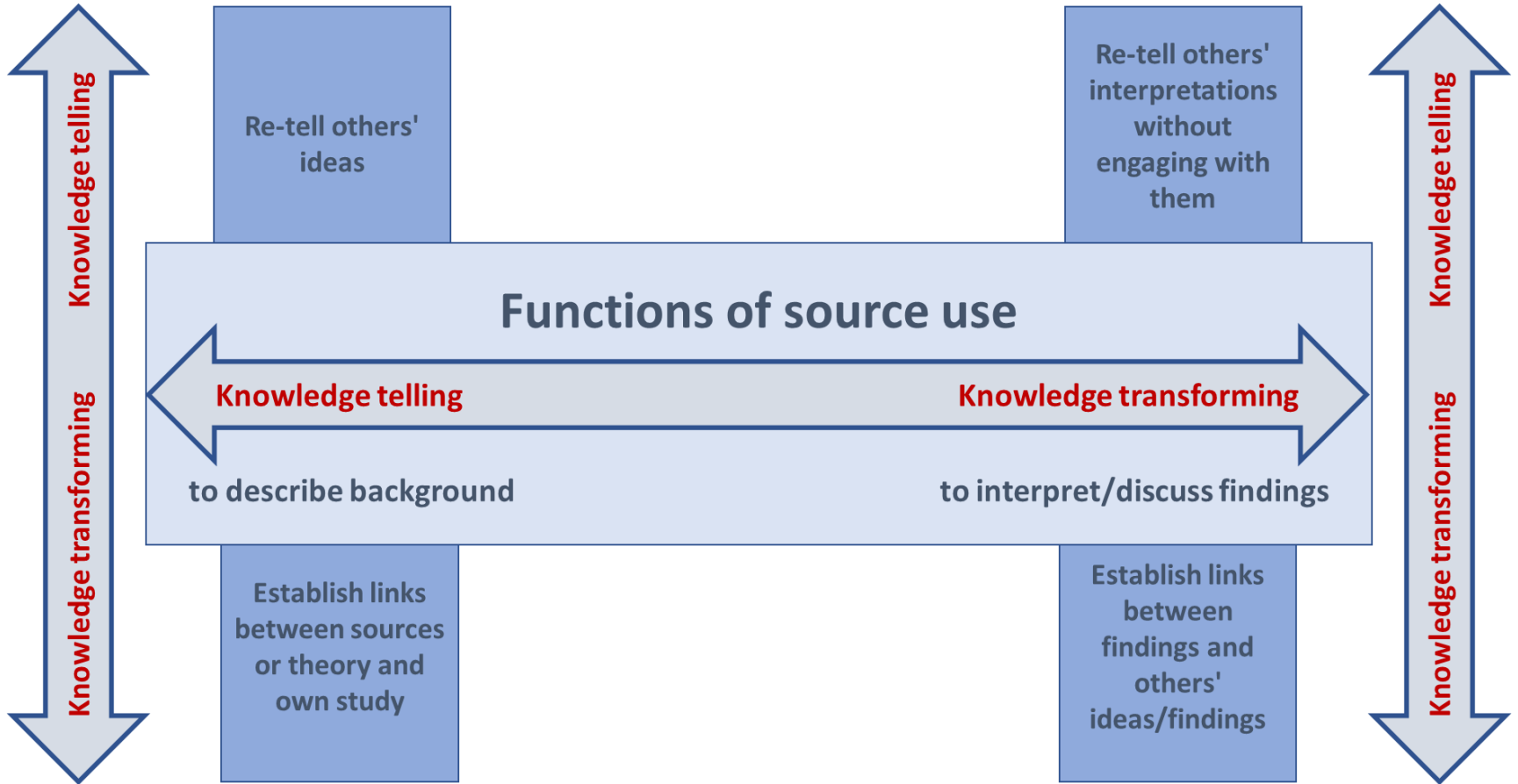
**Present previous  
research**

**Describe  
methodology**

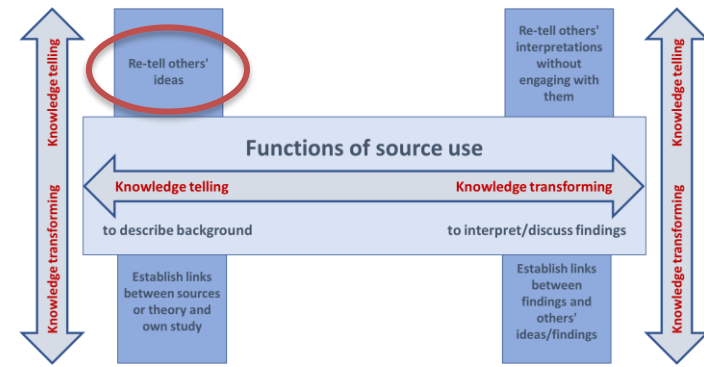
**Use theory for  
interpretation**

**Compare findings  
with findings  
from previous  
research**

**Discuss findings**



# Re-telling the ideas of the source



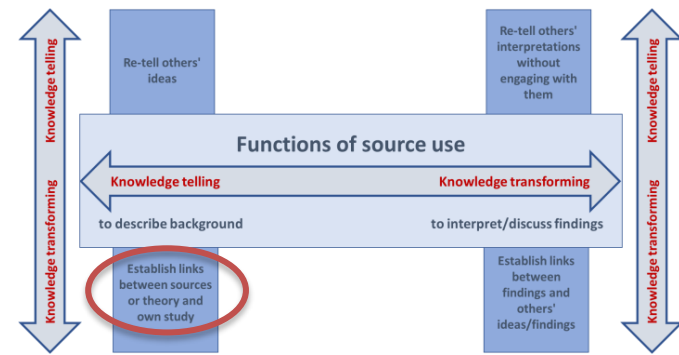
When writing about post-war British fiction **Randall Stevenson describes how** the Second World War has had a great impact on British fiction written in this period. Many modernist writers considered the First World War a **“Cataclysm’ cutting across the previously ‘smooth road’ of history”**, likewise the Second World War marked a break with the past for many postmodernist writers **(434)**. Furthermore, The Second World War disturbed the sense of historical continuity [...] **(435)**. **Finally, Stevenson emphasises how** the war [...] **(443)**. (Eli, ENGLIT)

# Research questions in theses from English Cultural Studies

## Questions that “invite” to knowledge telling?

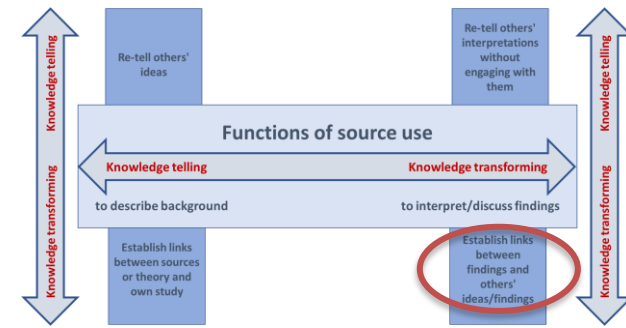
- “Was there a distinctive Thatcherite foreign policy in the 1980’s?”
- “How important was Winston Churchill’s wartime rhetoric for maintaining British Morale during the Second World War?”

# Putting sources into a dialogue



Yet, *Nixon also believes that it is not simply policy-makers but “writer-activists” who can play an important role in exposing this violence. “In a world permeated by insidious, unspectacular violence,” he argues, “writers can bring attention to [...]”.* **This view is supported by Kimberly A. Nance,** who documents [...] that “reading about social injustice [in literary texts] can increase [...]” (162). Stories engage readers’ feelings of empathy in a way statistics do not, and [...]. **The importance of this is emphasized by Judith Butler’s argument that [...] (24-25).** (Brit, ENGLIT)

# Actively engaging with the source's words



*According to Adam Glaz, the story is narrated from a third-person point of view; “The narrator and the protagonist share the same body; physically they are one. Yet, the story is told in the third person. [...]” (111). While Glaz is correct in his observation that the narrator refers to the protagonist in the third-person and since they share the same body it can in that sense be seen as a third-person narrative. Even so, I argue that this is a first-person narrative, albeit disrupted by the fact that the narrator and the protagonist are two distinct personas inhabiting the same body [...]. Although the narrator refers to the protagonist in the third person, this is still a first-person narrative; the narrator is internal to the story and refers to himself as ‘I’ and to the protagonist as ‘we’. (Eli, ENGLIT)*

# Implications for writing pedagogy

- Focus on writing as social activity and interaction with others' words
  - understanding the various functions of source use
- Design writing activities that support students' engagement with sources

**“A good writing assignment [...] deepens students' engagement with course material, promotes critical thinking, and help students learn the discipline's characteristic methods of inquiry, analysis, and argument” (Bean, 2011, s. 119)**

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