

The Tagmemic Heuristic

Not all heuristics are suggested by writing tradition or literature. The tagmemic heuristic of Young, Becker, & Pike (1970) came from tagmemic linguistics, which appropriated the terminology from physics. Students are required to create and fill in nine compartments in a matrix labeled with contrast, variation, and distribution on one axis and particle, wave, and field on the other. The system itself takes some time to think through, effectively attenuating pre-drafting thought. According to Kneupper (1980), part of the tagmemic's appeal over long lists of questions was "memorability," since students remembering the six terms can generate all nine topics. The real problem with the tagmemic heuristic is that it requires extensive abstractions in order to view an issue in tagmemic terms. Those abstractions may not lead to useful analysis.

Young, Richard E., Alton L. Becker, and Pike, Kenneth L. (1970). *Rhetoric: Discovery and change*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World.

	Particle	Wave	Field
Contrast			
Variation			
Distribution			

The same heuristic with descriptors. Not much help for students, though.

	contrast	variation	distribution
particle	isolated static entity	specific variant form of the concept	part of larger content
wave	dynamic object or event	dynamic process	as part of larger dynamic context
field	abstract, multi-dimensional system	multidimensional physical system	as abstract system within larger system

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