

Haiku on language and language analysis

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Rippling tone system
boggles analytic minds,
yet flows from speakers.

Seeing a nighthawk;
seizing the moment to ask,
and learning a word.

Cotton animal
and beard animal are apt
names for sheep and goats.

Take two synonyms,
put them next to each other,
and make a doublet.

I like principles,
maybe too much -- they often
get me in trouble.

I love pigeonholes,
but it's hard to fit language
or life into them.

Language is messy;
it defies my attempts to
put it in a box.

Language has pattern.
Yes, but all of the rules seem
to have exceptions.

All it takes to wreck
my elegant grammar is
one new fast-speech form.

Did I really think
that Trique and Mixtec were
simpler than English?

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I see the surface;
I guess what lies underneath.
Often I am wrong.

I start a session
hoping to resolve questions,
but end up with more.

Maybe wisdom lies
in seeing and admitting
how little we know.

Mixtec at sixty
and Trique at twenty-six.
Lifetime of learning.

My race against time:
organize and share data
while I'm still alive.

My life ebbs away.
Days get frittered with junk jobs.
How to redeem time?

Many things to do;
Not enough time -- hard choice is
inevitable.

Long intense writing.
Finally a draft is done.
Wonderful relief.

Great satisfaction:
to finish a project and
twitch it off the list.

It makes me happy
to help my colleagues fulfill
their linguistic task.