

## *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.