

Remarks from the recipient of the 2015 Charles A. Ferguson Award for Outstanding Scholarship

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Thank you, Guadalupe, for that very generous introduction. And thank you to the Center for Applied linguistics (Terry, Beatriz, and the rest of the staff) and to Stanford University for this incredible honor.

There are so many other scholars with equally strong connections to Fergie who are so much more deserving of this award: colleagues at Stanford like John Rickford whom Fergie also mentored and the late Joshua Fishman with whom he had a long, deep and abiding friendship; former students of linguistics like Lily Wong Fillmore, Mary McGroarty and James Tollefson, whose own contributions to the field of applied linguistics are legendary; colleagues at CAL like Dick Tucker and Donna Christian, who have made the Center for Applied Linguistics the rich resource and guiding light in the field that it has become; to name but a few. I only hope that my receipt of this inaugural award won't diminish it too much in the eyes of future recipients.

In the spring of 1984, I went to Stanford to give a job talk. Charles Ferguson's work had influenced my dissertation even more than I was aware at the time, but I had never met him and had only a vague picture of what he looked like in my head. But when he arrived in the Dean's conference room for the talk, late (I was soon to discern a pattern here), I immediately knew who he was. My anxiety must have increased three-fold. After the talk, over lunch at the faculty Club, I was surprised to realize that he had actually listened to the talk. He seemed to like what I was trying to do, but pointed out, in the most non-threatening way, directions this work could take that I hadn't begun to imagine. His influence on me, and my love and respect for him, both professionally and personally, grew with each subsequent encounter.

I can't help but wonder if Fergie might be looking down on this event and thinking, "Alas, so much unrealized potential." For Fergie's own accomplishments and contributions as a scholar are astounding: first chair, and first full-time appointment in Linguistics at Stanford, academic appointments at universities on five continents, honorary doctorates from Stockholm University and Georgetown University, charter member of the American Association of Teachers of Arabic, the Arabic Linguistic Society, and TESOL, past president of the Linguistic Society of America (Although obviously not a charter member, how many other past presidents can say that they attended their first LSA meeting while still in high school?)

Fergie was among the first linguists hired by the Foreign Service Institute, an experience that fostered his interests in Arabic linguistics, sociolinguistics, and applied linguistics. In his roles as founder and first president of the Center for Applied Linguistics, he enjoyed bringing diverse groups of people together to work on common problems, and CAL always remained close to his heart.

Although he is considered among the founders of both the fields of sociolinguistics and applied linguistics, he considered himself first and foremost a linguist. The range of his contributions to linguistics spans more areas than most scholars even read: from Arabic linguistics to Bengali syntax, from child language acquisition to language planning, from language and religion to language universals, from diglossia to genre analysis. He introduced us to the simplified registers of baby talk and foreigner talk, and even made sense of sports announcer talk. He once told me that for a long time he felt he had been interested in too many things. But somewhere around the age of 50, he realized that he was not going to change. I, for one, am grateful that he didn't. He taught me that one doesn't need to be a theoretical ideologue to pursue a career in academia.

Ferguson's work reflects the diversity he embraced in both his professional and private lives. The festschrift presented to him on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday had editors from five continents and, he was proud to point out, four different religious traditions. He was also proud to point out that he, a Lutheran, married Shirley Brice Heath in the Jesuit chapel at Georgetown, with an Orthodox Jew (Joshua Fishman) singing the Blessing, followed by a reception at the home of a Greek Orthodox couple (James and Penelope Alatis).

For a man who never *applied* for a job in his life, he was exceedingly approachable, kind, ethical, and modest. He took great pride in his students, and their many outstanding accomplishments are a tribute to his tutelage. Fergie reached out to touch those lucky enough to have crossed his path. In my own case, when he heard that I had lost my life partner, he called from his room in the nursing home where he was living the last few years of his life to express his sympathy and to ask if there was anything he could do for me.

In his autobiographical sketch "Long-term commitment and lucky events," Ferguson looked back on his life with gratitude, quoting the words of the psalmist, "The lines for me have fallen in pleasant places." For all who knew him, the lines for us, too, have fallen in pleasant places. I cherish the memories of him, as does everyone lucky enough to have known him. So thank you, CAL and Stanford, not just for this award but for working to keep the memory of Charles Ferguson alive.