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May 21, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

Maria Beatriz Paternain has asked me to write a letter on her behalf for a teaching position, and I am happy to comply. I can recommend her without reservation. Maria is an excellent student and a natural linguist with a promising career in language teaching or in any work involving the use of appropriate communication skills in either English or Spanish. Maria was one of my academic advisees and also a student in three of my courses.

During her studies at the University of Georgia, Maria took my course *LLED 7732: Classroom Discourse*. She excelled in this rigorous course, which highlighted how researchers can use interactional sociolinguistics, ethnography of communication, critical discourse analysis and other approaches within ethnographic and qualitative research to investigate classroom interactions. For instance, Maria's final project was a very effective discourse analysis of the interactions between a teacher and her students in an urban school context. Maria focused on the role of repetition in the teacher's discourse and how this discourse strategy supported language learners in elaborating on their responses in culturally responsive ways. Her work was methodical, clear, and systematic. She earned the highest possible grade in the course.

In spring 2012, Maria took another of my courses, *LLED 7503: Content-Based Language Instruction*. In this course, Maria learned to analyze and scaffold the language and content demands of academic discourses to support language learners in reading and writing in specific subject areas. Maria specialized in the teaching of a second language through Science. In order to do so, she observed several classrooms and wrote up an observation log that included a very systematic description of the teaching practices, scaffolding, and language demands of a 3rd grade classroom that had a significant number of English Language Learners. Using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Maria also analyzed the lexico grammatical and rhetorical features of the language in a 3rd grade science textbook to investigate potential language issues that language learners may encounter when reading science (e.g. lexical density, grammatical metaphors). Maria's final course project demonstrated how a critical multiliteracies approach to literacy can provide students with an enhanced understanding of complex academic registers. She developed an outstanding curricular unit for the Science classroom within a sociocultural (e.g. Vygotsky) and SFL (e.g. Halliday) framework. Maria put into practice part of this unit by teaching reading and writing strategies to language learners in a middle school in the area. Maria related well to the students and supported their learning needs effectively at the same time as she promoted classroom talk. She successfully implemented the strategies and theories learned in class, which enhance students' literacy abilities. She clearly loves both the study of languages and the art of teaching.

In addition to her careful and very sensitive work as an educator and researcher, Maria is a very collaborative team participant. Overall, she is truly an outstanding scholar and teacher. She is very personable, committed and motivated in her pursuit of high level scholarship, of excellence in her graduate work, and of social equity for her students. If you would like to contact me about any of the above, I can be reached at: (413) 262-9360.

Yours,

Ruth Harman, Assistant Professor,
TESOL and World Language Education

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