

PROMOTION RECOMMENDATION  
The University of Michigan  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Acrisio M. Pires, associate professor of linguistics, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, is recommended for promotion to professor of linguistics, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.

Academic Degrees:

Ph.D.	2001	University of Maryland, College Park
M.A.	1996	University of Brasilia
B.A.	1992	University of Brasilia

Professional Record:

2013	Visiting Faculty, Linguistic Institute, Linguistic Society of America, University of Michigan
2008 – present	Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Michigan
2003	Visiting Instructional Faculty, University of Brasilia
2002 – 2008	Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Michigan
2001 – 2002	Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Michigan

Summary of Evaluation:

Teaching – Professor Pires teaches courses that train students in linguistic theory and guide them in using empirical data to evaluate formal theoretical models of cognitive representations. His teaching is essential to the department's undergraduate and graduate curricula in syntax, and the undergraduate curriculum in semantics; it contributes as well to student training in comparative linguistics, language acquisition, and bilingualism. This wide-ranging course repertoire is important to the language component of the college's ongoing cognitive science initiative. As a mentor, Professor Pires is a proactive advisor who is very favorably viewed by his advisees. He is frequently sought out as an undergraduate honors thesis advisor and doctoral dissertation chair. He also regularly engages in research partnerships with students through the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program and other programs.

Research – Professor Pires is one of the world's leading theoreticians in the study of Portuguese syntax. Recently his research program broadened to include theoretically informed experimental investigations of first and second language learners' acquisition of syntactic structures. He also studies language change, especially the role of children in creating new syntactic constructions. Conducting research that falls within the intersection of theoretical syntax, experimental psycholinguistics, and historical linguistics requires mastering three entirely distinct research methodologies. The innovation of his work derives from new insights that emerge precisely because of this important intersection. Particularly significant is a recent series of acquisition studies that test predictions of his earlier work and inform theories of formal syntax, language change, and language development. These studies, done in collaboration with a strong team of researchers led by Professor Pires, have resulted in a set of tightly interconnected articles in top-tier journals, book chapters, and published conference proceedings, as well as a co-edited volume

on syntactic studies of children's and adult's acquisition of Portuguese. The next phase in this high-profile, highly productive research agenda is a sole-authored book on comparative syntax, under contract with Cambridge University Press.

#### Recent and Significant Publications:

"Subject-to-subject raising and the syntax of tense in L2 Spanish: A full access approach," with G. Campos-Dintrans and J. Rothman, *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 17, 2014, pp. 38-55 (also published online 2012).

"Linguistic competence, poverty of the stimulus and the scope of native language acquisition," in Multiple Perspectives on Bilingualism, C. Flores (ed.), Humus Publishers, 2011, pp. 115-143.

Minimalist Inquiries into Child and Adult Language Acquisition: Case Studies across Portuguese, co-edited with J. Rothman, Mouton de Gruyter, 2009.

"Disentangling sources of incomplete acquisition: An explanation for competence divergence across heritage grammars," with J. Rothman, *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 13, 2009, pp. 211-239.

Service – Professor Pires' exemplary service to the department includes frequent election to the Executive Committee, past chair of the Undergraduate Committee, and current chair of the Graduate Committee. He contributes as well to college- and university-level initiatives. His considerable service to the profession is consistent with, and reinforces, his national and international stature. It is especially commendable that Professor Pires is investing in the future of the discipline through his numerous efforts to improve the undergraduate and graduate experience for linguistics students at the university, national, and international levels.

#### External Reviewers:

##### Reviewer (A)

"...Pires is an important scholar, working on some of the most exciting issues in contemporary linguistics: those which sit at the juncture between our understanding of the human genetic capacity for language (so-called 'Universal Grammar'), the empirical study of the process whereby humans come to possess specific instantiations of this capacity ('language acquisition'), and the observed variability across time of these specific instantiations ('language change')."

##### Reviewer (B)

"...the results of his acquisition work are valuable not only for the empirical support they give to theories of language change, but also for the insights they provide into language development itself. ... The research paradigm that has been developed is quite extraordinary in both its breadth, involving different methodologies, dialects, subject populations, and its depth."

##### Reviewer (C)

"Dr. Pires has done groundbreaking work on the syntax of clausal types, with an emphasis on the cross-linguistic expression of non-finite clauses and their correlative quirks. In recent years he has added to this work research on first and second language acquisition as well as language change. ... It's clear that he's developing research programs on problems of central importance."

Reviewer (D)

"There is substantial evidence of intensive research activity leading to quality publications in three major areas of research, at least one of which is new and highly beneficial for the Department's ability to attract more funding as well as its profile and international image. The potential problem of overstretch is tempered by the unified approach adopted such that findings in one area naturally feed into research projects in other areas. There is also clear evidence that the activity is likely to remain as intense and lead to quality publications in the future."

Reviewer (E)

"Prof. Pires is a highly visible, very respected scholar in the area of Romance syntax, syntactic theory, and bilingual language acquisition. With his personal and his editorial work, he has been an important contributor and supporter [of] Portuguese linguistics."

Reviewer (F)

"I am very impressed with the overall quality and novelty of Professor Pires' work. He has managed to bring together in a cohesive way two sub-areas that are at the center of modern linguistic research: (i) syntactic theory...and (ii) experimental research on language acquisition. ... Professor Pires is one of the few linguists that I know of that has successfully bridged these two areas and built a significant part of his research program integrating them, with illuminating results."

Reviewer (G)

"I find this pioneering work, done in collaboration, highly valuable because of its implications for syntactic theory and our theory of language acquisition. ... This work is published in prominent places, including the proceedings of the prestigious Boston University Conference on Language Development, and has been very well received."

Summary of Recommendation:

Professor Pires has established an excellent research program addressing core issues in linguistic theory with powerful experimental evidence. His teaching and leadership roles reflect his broad-based, innovative approach to the discipline and his intellectual engagement with students and their work. The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts and I recommend that Associate Professor Acrisio M. Pires be promoted to the rank of professor of linguistics, with tenure, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts.



Susan A. Gelman

Heinz Werner Distinguished University Professor,  
Professor of Psychology and Interim Dean  
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

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