

Overall, the book is more social theory- and cultural studies-oriented rather than linguistically oriented, and it will be useful to scholars in cultural studies, women studies, African studies, or Islamic studies.

(Received 4 December 2006)

*Language in Society* 36 (2007). Printed in the United States of America  
DOI: 10.1017/S0047404507070571

CHRISTOPHER J. HALL, *An introduction to language and linguistics: Breaking the language spell*. London/New York: Continuum, 2005. Pp. xvii, 344. Pb. \$24.95.

Reviewed by MADALENA CRUZ-FERREIRA  
*English Language and Literature*  
National University of Singapore  
ellmcf@nus.edu.sg

Part 1, "Magic," introduces language and linguistics. The "Language Spell" is Hall's metaphor for human beings' misperception of the nature of language as primarily social. The insights of (generative) linguistics hold the key to breaking the Spell, by revealing the "essential biological reality" of the "language faculty" (xii). The book opens with a discussion of language and thought ("mentalese"), where terms like "mystery" (10), "miracle" (11), "cognitive magic" (14), and the assignment of increasingly volitional features to the Spell (e.g., 26) set the tone.

Part 2, "Words," addresses naming, word acquisition, lexicography, phonology (four pages, 116–20), lexical semantics, and spelling. Part 3, "Grammar," turns to word formation, X-bar syntax, and pragmatics. Language acquisition "From DNA to discourse community" (chap. 8) rounds off this section. Part 4, "Babel," deals with sociolinguistic issues such as language diversity, dialects, education, and multilingualism, as well as with language biology and evolution.

Each of the 11 chapters ends with a "More information" section, offering bibliographic and online references. The book contains a glossary, a section detailing sources, a bibliography, and a two-part subject/scholar index.

There is a major typo (162) where "coda" and "rime" are swapped in a syllable structure diagram. There are several less accurate formulations, such as confusion between compositionality and headedness (165), between syntax and language itself as meaning-sound mediator (e.g. 180, 231), the statement that phonemes perform morphological conversion functions (134), and that pronouns "can substitute a whole noun phrase" (183) yet be "marked as NP" ("noun phrase" and "NP" are used interchangeably).

Hall's style is generally engaging, though discursive and often casual, fluctuating between a pleasant Spell-bound causerie and dense argumentation involving nativist-generativist tenets. One example: "Syntactic knowledge, perhaps including scary stuff like this part of Chomsky's 'Binding Principle' for pronoun interpretation, is invoked by all human beings many times a day, with as little ado as sneezing. It is only the Language Spell that prevents us from seeing the Binding Principle as part of who we are as users of language" (155). It is therefore unclear how seriously to take statements like "It's not yet possible to localize Swahili inflectional morphology or Spanish politeness strategies in the grey matter of the human brain" (272), offered as conclusion to the current "misty" view from neurolinguistics about human language.

The book's avowed purpose is to plead for universal reconciliation among human beings through the study of (generative) linguistics, which "can help us live a little better as individuals and members of local and global communities" (297). Data are taken from English, and occasionally from Spanish. Discussion keeps to conventional nativist-generativist discourse, with exactly the same arguments based on exactly the same English examples used throughout the past 40 years. Hall's vindication of the "armchair science" (194) associated with nativism-generativism proceeds through familiar non-empirical claims about the "breakneck speed" of children's language acquisition "without explicit cues in the input" (188), the "astonishing fact of multilingualism in individuals" (212), and the equation of "minds" with "brains" (282). These claims in turn substantiate Hall's endorsement of his chosen school of thought to exorcise the Spell.

(Received 6 December 2006)