Nélia Alexandre's book is two things at once: a careful study of the syntax of Cape Verdean Creole, and an innovative proposal about the nature of wh-movement. The title may be slightly misleading, as the defective copy theory of movement is not a general theory of movement, but a theory of the wh-movement strategy which Alexandre calls PSST, or preposition stranding with a spelled-out trace. The book might more aptly be titled Wh-Constructions in Cape Verdean Creole, but, as we will see, the more general theoretical relevance of Alexandre's proposal cannot be discounted.

Chapter 1 is a general introduction which lays out Alexandre's methodology. Her object of study is specifically the variety of CVC spoken on Santiago Island. The primary sources of data are twofold: in addition to using data from books written in CVC, she collected field data from native speakers living on Santiago Island as well as native speakers of the Santiago variety who were temporarily living in Portugal as students. The field data included both elicitation tasks and grammaticality judgments.

Chapter 2 motivates Alexandre's background assumptions about some aspects of the syntax of CVC. First, she argues, against Baptista (2002), that there is no overt verb movement in CVC, putting forth an analysis under which all verbs must be placed in V₀, the sole exception being e, the present tense form of the copula, which can appear in V₀ or T₀. She argues that e is an expression of present tense which merges in T₀, and in such constructions, a PredP rather than a VP is projected, so that the appearance of the copula in T₀ is not a case of verb movement. Next, she summarizes the pronominal system of CVC, which she argues is tripartite in the sense of Cardinaletti and Starke (1994), consisting of strong, non-clitic and clitic forms. She also describes the wh-elements of CVC in some detail. Finally, she discusses the structure of the DP and the CP in CVC. In both cases, she argues against a split structure. With regards to the DP, she argues that number is a formal feature of D₀ and gender is lexically marked, and that the functional categories of Number and Gender do not project. With regards to the CP, she discusses the behavior of seven different complementizers which occur in CVC, including the null complementizer, claiming that they are lexical instantiations of different combinations of five formal features of C₀.

Chapter 3 deals with the syntax of wh-questions in CVC, beginning by presenting the various question formation strategies employed in CVC. First, there is the gap strategy, in which a wh-element moves to SpecCP, leaving a phonetically empty copy in the extraction site. When a moved wh-element is selected for by a preposition, preposition stranding is inadmissible, so the PP is pied-piped to SpecCP. The second strategy is what Alexandre calls preposition stranding with a spelled-out trace, or PSST, which will motivate the proposal of the defective copy theory of movement in Chapter 5. This is an alternative to PP pied-piping, in which a stranded preposition is rescued by the presence of an invariable pronominal form, el, in the wh-element extraction site. The third strategy is P-chopping, in which a stranded preposition is deleted at PF. This particular strategy only applies to ‘light’ prepositions, such as di ‘of’, not heavy prepositions, such as kontra ‘against’. The difference between light and heavy prepositions may be expressed in terms of Case licensing, but Alexandre limits herself to speculation here. Finally, Alexandre discusses two strategies for the formation of wh-questions without wh-movement. The first is resumption, which applies when the wh-element is within a strong island. Resumption is
superficially similar to the PSST strategy, except that the resumptive pronoun agrees in number with the wh-element with which it is co-indexed; but Alexandre will argue that the two strategies are quite different. The second strategy is in situ wh-questions, which typically receive an echo reading, and which can occur in matrix clauses, though judgments differ on their grammaticality in embedded clauses.

Alexandre goes on to suggest that CVC has a positive value for the C parameter of Duarte (2000) – that is, the [Q] and [Wh] features of C⁰ are ambiguous, and wh-movement is a mechanism of disambiguating C⁰ by checking those features in a Spec-head agreement relation. For wh-in-situ, she claims that a matrix null C⁰ is projected which can bind the in situ wh-element, as its checking domain is not strictly local. Thus, wh-in-situ involves a negative value for the C parameter, and it does not involve covert movement.

Chapter 4 deals with the syntax of relativization in CVC, and again Alexandre begins by presenting the various relativization strategies employed in CVC. Although CVC has restrictive, appositive and free relative clauses, Alexandre focuses on restrictive relative clauses, since they are most similar to D-linked wh-questions. Generally speaking, the strategies available for relativization are parallel to those available for question formation. The null gap strategy is possible, but, unlike with wh-questions, PP pied-piping is only available when the relative clause is introduced by the relative operator undi ‘where’. Otherwise, the preposition must be left in situ. Since preposition stranding is inadmissible, this must be accomplished with one of the following strategies: PSST, P-chopping, or resumption, all of which are parallel to the corresponding strategies for question formation. Again, Alexandre argues for the classical view that resumption does not involve wh-movement, noting that it is insensitive to syntactic island effects.

Next, Alexandre considers two theories of the structure of restrictive relative clauses: those of Platzack (2000) and Bianchi (2002). Under Platzack’s analysis, the relative CP is a complement of the nominal head; the difference between a non-relative nominal complement clause and a restrictive relative clause is that the latter involves a wh-operator in SpecCP. However, Alexandre rejects this theory on the grounds that this theory provides no way of distinguishing structures derived from the PSST strategy from resumptive structures. Thus, she turns to the analysis of Bianchi (2002), in which the nominal head raises from its merged position to become the complement of a null D⁰ heading a DP in SpecCP. This theory, as stated in Bianchi (2002) also does not account for the distinction between PSST and resumption, so Alexandre adopts it in a modified form. Specifically, Alexandre claims that in a relative clause with a resumptive pronoun, the nominal head is merged in SpecCP and connected to the resumptive pronoun by an A’-binding chain. Whereas Bianchi claims that resumptive pronouns are the spell-out of a referential index at the foot of a wh-movement chain, Alexandre assumes that they are part of the Numeration. A PSST construction, on the other hand, follows Bianchi’s proposal, so that the nominal head is connected to the pronoun el by a wh-movement chain. Alexandre shows how this analysis can account for the various relativization strategies employed in CVC, making her perhaps overly perfunctory dismissal of Platzack’s analysis forgivable.

Chapter 5 contains the core of Alexandre’s proposal. First, she examines the PSST strategy in more detail, beginning with the nature of the pronominal form el. She considers whether el behaves like a wh-gap, which is a pure syntactic variable. First, el licenses parasitic gaps, which can only be licensed by pure syntactic variables, not by resumptive pronouns or other kinds of pronouns. Second, she considers sensitivity to strong crossover effects, but concludes that crossover effects cannot be used as a test to straightforwardly distinguish variables from resumptive
pronouns. Finally, she considers two tests used by Chao and Sells (1983) to distinguish variables from resumptive pronouns: unlike variables, resumptive pronouns cannot provide pair-list answers to wh-questions, nor can they be understood functionally. Again, she concludes that these tests cannot be used to distinguish variables from resumptive pronouns, since, for example, one can obtain pair-list answers and functional interpretations from resumptive pronouns in English and European Portuguese. Alexandre does provide some other data which suggests that el behaves as a variable: for instance, it cannot be coordinated with a noun, unlike resumptive pronouns in CVC. Thus, although three of the tests are inconclusive, Alexandre concludes that the other data favors the analysis of el as a wh-gap.

Next, Alexandre demonstrates that PSST involves wh-movement. Like the null gap strategy, the PSST strategy in CVC disallows both long wh-movement and successive-cyclic movement out of strong and weak islands, which demonstrates convincingly that PSST is a wh-movement strategy.

Alexandre goes on to consider the typology of languages in terms of what strategies they employ as an alternative to PP pied-piping. Languages of Type I, such as European Portuguese, allow neither preposition stranding nor PSST, so PPs are necessarily pied-piped with wh-movement. Languages of Type II, such as English, allow PP pied-piping as well as preposition stranding, but not PSST. Languages of Type III, such as CVC, allow PP pied-piping as well as PSST, but not preposition stranding. Alexandre concludes that preposition stranding and PSST are in complementary distribution, so there is no language which allows both. However, she does not support this claim with typological data, so it remains to be seen whether it holds cross-linguistically.

Alexandre suggests that the impossibility of preposition stranding in CVC is due to the impossibility of prepositions incorporating into verbs in CVC. Following Baker (1988), she claims that in languages which allow preposition stranding, the verb can incorporate the preposition, allowing the null gap to be formally licensed by being head-governed by the complex verb. In CVC, on the other hand, verbs cannot incorporate prepositions, so null gaps cannot be licensed.

Alexandre then examines two mainstream theories of movement, the copy theory of Chomsky (1995) and the copy + merge theory of Nunes (2004), and considers whether they can account for PSST. First, she considers the copy theory of movement, in which movement consists of four operations: Copy, Merge, Form Chain, and Delete. Crucially, the foot of the chain is predicted to be deleted under this theory. In PSST, though, the foot of the chain seems to be spelled out in the form of el. Furthermore, the copy theory of movement predicts that if the foot of the chain were to be spelled out, it would have the same phonetic form as the head of the chain, which is not the case with the PSST strategy in CVC. Thus, Alexandre turns to the copy + merge theory. This theory differs from the copy theory in that any link of a chain may be spelled out. Under this theory, movement consists of the following four operations: Copy, Merge, Form Chain, and Chain Reduction. Rather than deleting the foot of the chain, the Chain Reduction operation deletes the minimal number of constituents of the chain such that the chain can be linearized in accordance with the Linear Correspondence Axiom. Deletion of lower links is forced by the LCA, because any material intervening between two links of a chain will both asymmetrically c-command and be asymmetrically c-commanded by the same element, given that the links of a movement chain are non-distinct. This predicts the deletion of the lower link in the PSST strategy as well, under the assumption that el and the higher
link are non-distinct, incorrectly predicting the output of the PSST strategy to be ungrammatical.

Since neither theory of movement can quite account for PSST, Alexandre proposes her own theory, which she calls the defective copy theory of movement. First, she notes that CVC does not allow preposition incorporation, and PP pied-piping is disallowed when an overt complementizer is present. Thus, the lower link of the movement chain must be spelled out to prevent the derivation from crashing. She proposes that the lower copy is spelled out in the form of the expletive-like *el* because its array of formal features is defective at PF. Specifically, its formal features are deleted, but not erased, because one particular feature, the \([uCat + D]\) feature, is necessary for the derivation not to crash. At PF, that feature is spelled out as *el*. She formally defines a defective copy as in (1):

(1) *el* is a defective copy if it is:

(i) an underspecified/expletive pronoun post-syntactically inserted in the complement position of a preposition, and
(ii) the foot of a nontrivial chain (\(\alpha_{[uWh]} \ldots el\)).

Finally, she considers the observation, common in the literature on resumption, that there are two different kinds of resumptive pronouns: those outside of islands, which are formed by movement, and those inside islands, which are not. The two types of resumption frequently take the same form, and thus are often not distinguished in the literature. Of course, Alexandre suggests that the former type is in fact not a resumptive pronoun, but a defective copy, having shown throughout the book that defective chains in CVC behave quite differently from resumptive chains. She astutely suggests that the literature on resumption has frequently confused the two types of chains.

Chapter 6 summarizes the book and suggests avenues for further research: comparing defective copy strategies cross-linguistically, examining other types of relative clauses and wh-constructions, and looking at the acquisition of wh-constructions.

Alexandre’s book is an excellent one in two respects. As a careful study of the syntax of CVC, it will prove useful to researchers of the language and of creoles in general. When Alexandre departs from traditional assumptions about the syntax of CVC, she generally does so after careful consideration, so her analyses are thought-provoking, even if one ultimately disagrees with them. It is also valuable as an innovative proposal about the nature of movement. Most notably, her proposal about the difference between defective chains and resumptive chains seems like it could shed light on the literature on resumption, which is often confused, as definitions of resumption abound. If Alexandre is on the right track, then much of what has traditionally been considered resumption is actually the result of the formation of defective copies. The importance of her more general theoretical proposal about the nature of movement is more difficult to gauge. The defective copy theory of movement predicts that the PSST strategy will be found in any language which disallows preposition stranding but also disallows PP pied-piping, and Alexandre does not explore the cross-linguistic implications of her proposal, so it remains to be seen whether it will be relevant beyond CVC. Alexandre also claims that her book helps show that, contrary to McWhorter (2001), creoles are just as complex as any other languages. Although in a sense any in-depth examination of the structure of a creole language accomplishes this, Alexandre only pays lip service to the idea, and does not attempt to define the notion of complexity.
One minor criticism: Alexandre's book suffers from a lack of copyediting, and it is filled with typos and grammatical errors, which occasionally interfere with comprehension. This is, again, a minor criticism, and *The Defective Copy Theory of Movement* can be recommended to any researcher of wh-movement or creole linguistics.

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References


