On the typology of (obligatory) control
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In this talk, I want to ask (and try to answer) three main questions:
(i) What are the different types of obligatory control? How many distinctions do we need?
(ii) How should these distinctions be modelled? Are the distinctions syntactic or semantic?
(iii) Do all languages have all types of control? Why/why not?

Research on control in generative grammar has been incredibly fruitful. Since early discussions by Chomsky (1965) and Rosenbaum (1967), the interesting challenges posed by non-finite clauses have been clear and a wide range of languages have been studied with respect to broadly the same range of phenomena. While many questions of analysis remain, we now have a broad consensus with respect to certain important distinctions: control vs. raising, non-obligatory vs. obligatory control, exhaustive vs. partial control vs. split control etc. What remains less clear, however, are the precise criteria according to which these distinctions are drawn and thus their robustness cross-linguistically. Consider, for example, partial control, which has been central to recent discussions of obligatory control. While, in some languages, it is only the control predicate which regulates the licensing of partial control (English, Icelandic), in other languages, the embedded predicate also plays a role (French, Spanish, German) (Sheehan 2014, Pitteroff et al. 2015). This strongly suggests that ‘partial control’ is not a uniform phenomenon analytically. A similar problem arises for exhaustive control and restructuring, which are partially overlapping but distinct phenomena, as we shall also see.

I will argue that genuine instances of partial control have the following property:
(1) Partial control is possible only into a cased complement.
I show that in a number of languages in which PRO can have case this holds (Russian, Icelandic, European Portuguese, possibly also Basque) (Landau 2008, Sheehan 2016, Duguine and Sheehan 2015). Other apparent cases of partial control are ‘fake’, involving a null comitative (Sheehan 2014).

In relation to (ii), I will propose that obligatory control arises because of thematic probing in a model in which theta-roles are assigned configurationally. Where the complement domain is non-phasal, the result is thematic movement whereby a single DP occupies two theta-positions, as per the movement theory of control. Where the complement is phasal, however, movement is banned and ambiguous exhaustive/partial control arises as a kind of repair. This allows us to unify partial and exhaustive control whilst accounting for their semantic and syntactic differences. Broad parallels across Russian, Icelandic, European Portuguese and Basque provide support for such a model, though some problems, which will be outlined, remain (some of which are taken up in other presentations at this conference).

In relation to (iii), I will briefly consider languages which seem to lack true instances of partial control (notably Romanian, Mandarin, Greek, French, Spanish and Italian). I’ll propose that in some cases this can be attributed to a fatal ambiguity between partial control and accidental partial co-reference (e.g. Romanian and Mandarin). In others, however, the gap must be attributed to the structure of embedded CPs: there is no EPP feature triggering movement of the subject to spec CP and so no possibility of partial control. This is the case even though non-finite CPs are also case domains in these languages, permitting overt referential subjects (Torrego 1998).