

# The PRO-wh connection in modal existential wh-constructions

## An argument in favor of semantic control

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**Abstract** Recent discussion of obligatory control in the literature mostly concentrates on the issue of which syntactic module (movement, agreement, etc.) is responsible for the establishment of the control relation. This paper looks at the issue of control from a higher order perspective. Abandoning the presupposition that control constituents denote propositions and that, therefore, control must be syntactic, I deliver an argument in favor of the property-type analysis of control constituents and, by transitivity, for a semantic resolution of the control relation. The argument comes from modal existential wh-constructions and in particular from a strong parallelism between obligatorily controlled PRO and wh-expressions. It is revealed that PRO and wh-words form a natural class, to the exclusion of all other types of nominal expressions. This is then turned into an argument of treating PRO (and wh-words) essentially as a logical lambda-operator, naturally leading to the property theory of control. In addition, the article contributes to our understanding of the syntax, semantics, and typology of modal existential wh-constructions. It is argued that at least one type of these constructions, what I call “control MECs”, is embedded (minimally) by a complex predicate BE + FOR which expresses the state of availability (BE) which makes it possible for someone to profit (FOR) from the event characterized by the modal existential wh-construction.

**Keywords** Modal existential wh-constructions · Obligatory control · PRO · Wh-words · Syntax-semantics interface

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