A prevalent assumption in control studies holds that clausal complements either display Obligatory Control (OC) or no control at all, but never show Non-Obligatory Control (NOC), as subject clauses may do. I argue that there is a systematic class of exceptions to this generalization – communication verbs. New evidence shows that both the speaker and addressee of the utterance can control the null subject of complements to verbs like say, suggest, recommend, etc. (e.g., when Mary tells John: The boss said to pull yourself together). Likewise, arbitrary and long-distance control are allowed. Lastly, it can be shown that PRO is restricted to human referents even when uncontrolled – a hallmark of NOC. Alternative analyses of the data, like implicit control or embedded imperatives, are empirically inadequate.

Communication verbs are systematically ambiguous between a triadic, truly communicative sense, that selects a goal argument (sometimes left implicit), and a dyadic, declarative sense, selecting no goal. While the former induces OC by the goal argument, the latter displays NOC – thus falsifying the view that NOC is never attested in complements. The two variants, however, are unified in their underlying grammar. Following Landau 2015, I assume that control clauses are “oriented” to some context of speech/thought; control is just the association of PRO with a participant (either AUTHOR or ADDRESSEE) in one such context. OC and NOC only differ in which contextual information (\(C_{\text{matrix}}\), \(C_{\text{Speech-Act}}\) or \(C_{\text{long-distance}}\) they make available to PRO; the information is always represented in the local complementizer. OC is restricted, by selection, to specify the matrix context, whereas NOC allows reference to any context – linguistic or deictic (speech act) – as long as it is salient. The ambiguity of communication verbs, then, boils down to selection vs. no-selection of a particular context of evaluation for their complement.