Unexpected non-obligatory control

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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*). Like-wise, 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 impera-tives, 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_{matrix}, $c_{Speech-Act}$ or $c_{long-distance}$) they make available to PRO; the information is always represented in the local complementizer. OC is restricted, by selection, to specify the matrix con-text, 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.