Speech Act Control: An Unrecognized Type

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Verbs of communication typically display object control when taking nonfinite complements (1a). This unique interpretation is standardly described as Obligatory Control (OC) by the goal argument. Without the goal argument, however, the status of such sentences is less clear (1b).

(1) a. Bill asked/demanded from/said to the $kids_i$ [PRO_i to return early]
b. Bill said [PRO to return early].

There are two schools of thought on (1b). One camp holds that even in the absence of an overt matrix goal argument, an implicit goal continues to control PRO (*implicit OC*; Manzini 1983, Koster 1984, Wyngaerd 1994, Landau 2000, 2013). A second camp holds that PRO in (1b) is just the arbitrary PRO found in Non-Obligatory Control (*NOC*; Bresnan 1982, Bouchard 1984, Huang 1989, Sag and Pollard 1991). In this talk I argue that both camps have failed to identify the special control behavior of communication verbs. Alongside implicit OC, (1b) exhibits a distinct type of control, hitherto unrecognized, whereby PRO is associated with the speaker or addressee of the utterance context. This type is less restricted than OC and more restricted than NOC, deserving its own title, *Speech Act Control* (SAC). We proceed by demonstrating that SAC is not reducible to (i) implicit OC, (ii) NOC, or (iii) embedded imperatives.

Against the implicit OC analysis. In many situations, the implicit goal need not be identified with PRO under communication verbs. Consider the following scenario.

(2) Dad is reading in the living room. Jen, his older daughter, is there too. The little boys are in their room, making a hell lot of noise. Dad tells Jen to go tell the kids to be quiet. Jen walks over to the boys' room, enters it and utters (a).

a. Dad said [PRO to be quiet]
b. Dad said to Jen [PRO to be quiet]

Clearly, what (2a) means in the given context cannot be rendered by (2b). Although Jen was the addressee of dad's speech act and is, by virtue of this fact, the referent of the implicit goal in (2a), it does not control PRO. Instead, it is the actual addressee of Jen's speech act, *the boys*, that controls PRO. Thus, SAC is not reducible to implicit OC.

Against the NOC analysis. In NOC, the antecedent of PRO is some salient referent. This referent *could* be a participant in the speech act, but differently from SAC, does not have to. To see this difference, assume that in scenario (2) Jen passes by mom on her way to the boys' room. She cannot report to mom what dad told her using (3).

(3) # It's the $boys_i$. Dad said [PRO_i to behave themselves].

Despite the fact *the boys* refers to a salient entity, both contextually and linguistically, it is not a suitable antecedent for PRO in this situation. Crucially, such salience *is* sufficient to furnish a licit antecedent for NOC (subject clauses typically display NOC).

(4) It's the boys. [PRO behaving themselves] would really make dad happy.

Because the controller in SAC must be the speaker or addressee, and *the boys* is neither, control fails in (3). Because the controller in NOC only needs to be salient, control succeeds in (4). Thus, SAC is not reducible to NOC. Note that the potential occurrence of *oneself* in the complement of *say* is not a

reliable evidence for NOC (the argument draws on Landau's (2000) parallel demonstration that *oneself* in interrogative complements fails to diagnoze NOC).

Against the embedded imperative (EI) analysis. Imperatives can be embedded in a number of languages (Kaufmann 2014, Medeiros 2015). In dialectal English they can too, provided the complementizer is dropped (e.g., *John said call mom*). The phenomenon in (2a), however, is different, even if one is willing to analyze the infinitival marker *to* as allomorph of the imperative marker (zero in English).

First, as Crnić and Trinh (2009) show, *say* is the single verb that can embed imperatives in English, but SAC complements can be embedded by other communication verbs.

(5) a. I talked to the doctor. He recommended getting/*get yourself a new medicine.
b. I talked to mom. She suggested *(to) dress yourself up for the reception.

More importantly, PRO in SAC may refer to the speaker directly, whereas the null subject of an EI may refer to the speaker *only* if the latter coincides with the command's addressee (Tyler 2015). Suppose that in scenario (2), after Jen leaves, one of the boys turns to the other and utters (6).

(6) Let's calm down, dad said *(to) behave ourselves.

In fact, the infinitival version of (6) is possible even if Jen failed to deliver the message to the boys (hence, they were not anyone's addressees) but they happened to overhear it from the other room. The fact that *to* is obligatory indicates that the subject of an EI can't *directly* refer to the utterance speaker. Thus, SAC is not reducible to EIs.

An analysis. How does SAC fit in the overall landscape of control? The key idea is that all control clauses are "oriented" to some context of speech/thought; control is just the association of PRO with a participant in one such context. Landau (2015) proposes that OC and NOC only differ in which contextual information (c_{matrix}, $c_{\text{Speech-Act}}$ or $c_{\text{long-distance}}$) they make available to PRO; the information is always represented in the local C (or C-system). OC is restricted, by selection, to specify the matrix context on the head of the controlled CP. NOC allows reference to any context – linguistic or deictic (speech act) – as long as it is salient. Against this background, it is natural to locate communication verbs in-between these two poles.

(7) *Local Context accessibility in control*

C^0 encodes:	c_{matrix}	$c_{\text{Speech-Act}}$	$c_{\text{long-distance}}$
Standard attitudinal OC verbs	+	–	–
Communication verbs (SAC)	+	+	–
NOC	+	+	+

An interesting question is why OC wins over SAC if the matrix goal argument is overt (e.g., **Dad said to Jen [PRO to behave yourselves]*). One possibility is that the two construals compete and OC is favored as being more economical; when the goal argument is implicit, a tie results, possibly due to the extra cost associated with parsing implicit arguments. A second possibility is that communication verbs are lexically ambiguous between a goal-less, dyadic entry and a goal-projecting, triadic entry; OC would uniformly apply in the latter, SAC in the former.

Selected References. **Crnić, L., and Trinh, T**. 2009. Embedding Imperatives in English. In *Proceedings of Sinn und Bedeutung 13*. **Medeiros, D.** 2015. Embedded Ancient Greek Imperatives: A Feature Transfer Analysis. *Syntax* 18:124-156. **Kaufmann, M.** 2014. Embedded Imperatives Across Languages: Too Rare to Expect, Too Frequent to Ban: Colloquium handout, Stony Brook. **Landau, I.** 2015. *A Two-Tiered Theory of Control*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. **Tyler, M.** 2015. English Embedded Imperatives Have a Context-shifting Operator. Handout of a talk, CGG 25, IKER.