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Saturday, March 7th: 4:00-5:00

Degree Operator Scope and Distributivity

A superlative predicate like *tallest* need not be interpreted as distributing over a plural subject. Sentence (1)a), for example, need not be read as conveying that each of the two cooks is tallest, implying that each is taller than the other. This is remarkable because the bare adjective *tall* is distributive. Sentence (1)b) does entail that each of the two cooks is tall.

- (1) a. The two cooks are tallest.
b. The two cooks are tall.

Why does the superlative operator affect the distributivity of an adjective it combines with in this way? I will present an answer proposed in the literature (Stateva 2000) according to which the operator *-est* is permitted to take inverse scope over a silent distributive operator and I will defend the analysis against an objection that has been brought forth against it (Fitzgibbons, Sharvit, and Gajewski, in press).