

## THE ADVANCEMENT ANALYSIS OF IMPERSONAL PASSIVES AND THE 1-ADVANCEE PRESERVATION LAW

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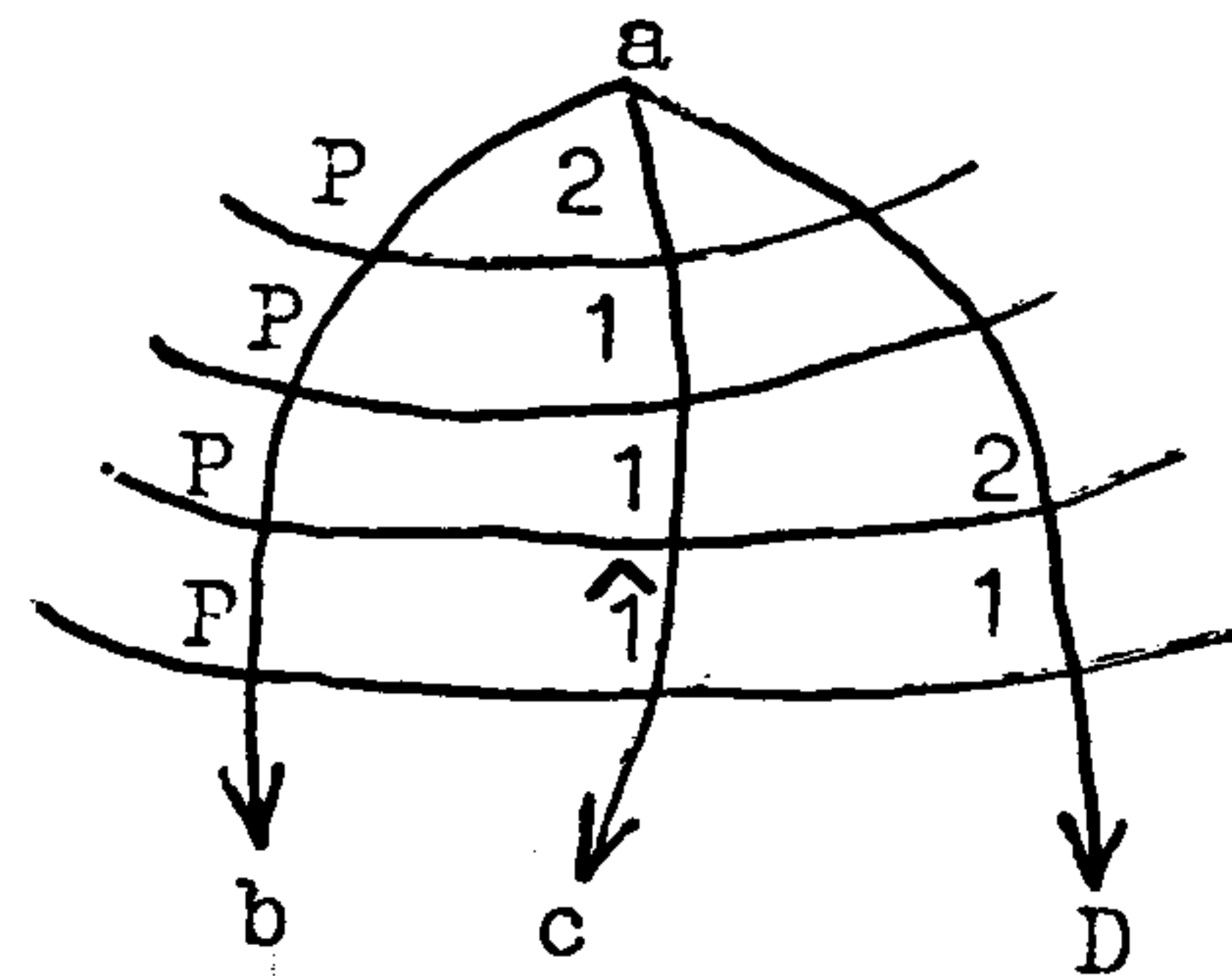
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This paper is a squib rather than a full-fledged article and concerns an unnoticed possibility of analyzing impersonal passive constructions. In linguistic literature written in the Relational Grammar fold two analyses of impersonal passive constructions were vying for priority: the demotion analysis, which had its adherents in Keenan (1975), Comrie (1977), Jain (1977) and Wachtel (1979), and the advancement analysis proposed by Perlmutter (1978) and, in a somewhat revamped form, reiterated by Johnson and Postal (1980) and Perlmutter and Postal (1984). In this paper I wish to present a third logically possible analysis, which combines the advancement analysis of impersonal passives with the proposed by Wachtel (1979) 1-Advancee Preservation Law. The rationale for such amalgamation of elements from the two antagonistic analyses will be provided by data from Polish.

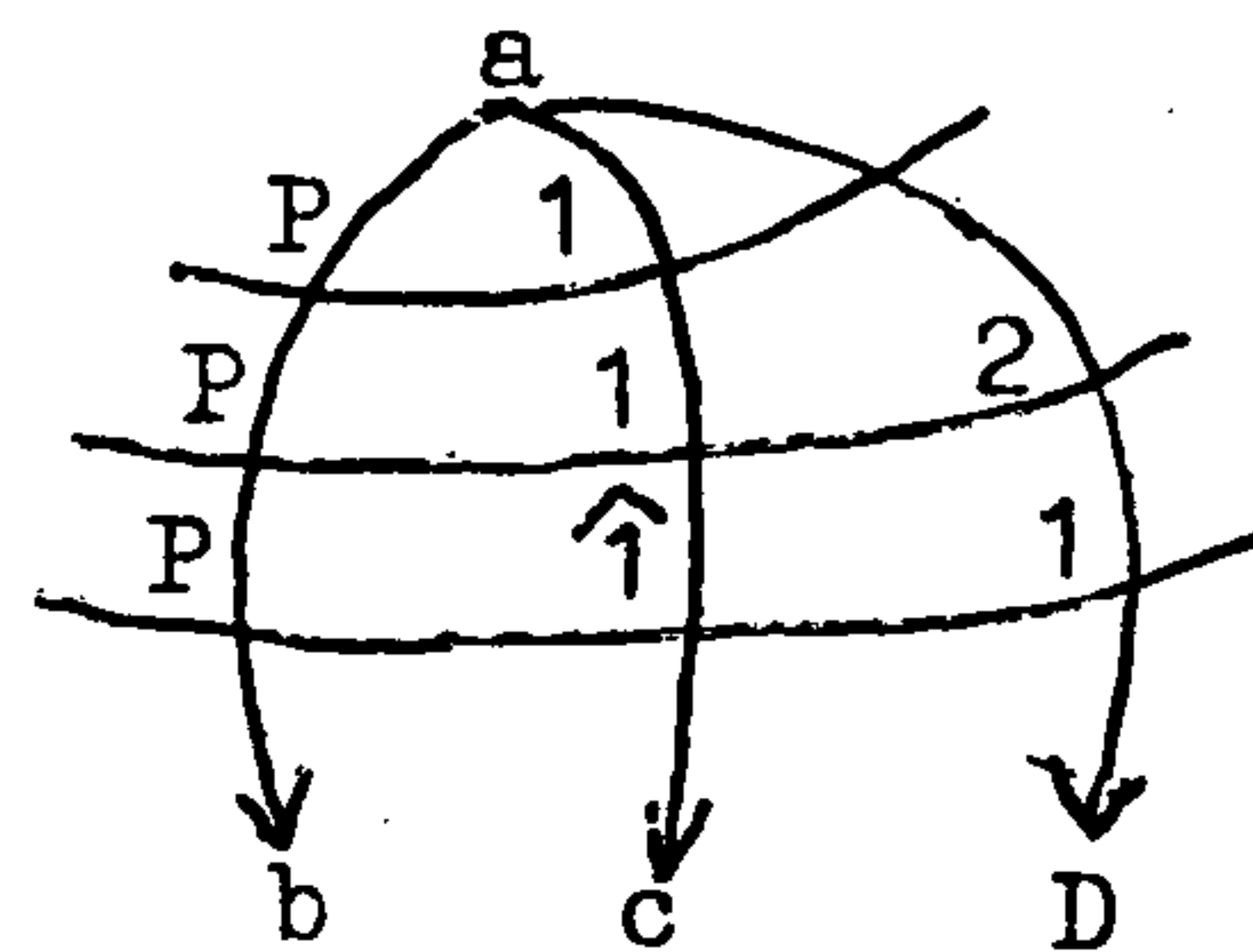
Keenan (1975), Comrie (1977) and Jain (1977) all believe that impersonal passives involve spontaneous demotion of the initial subjects in these constructions to the status of *chômeurs*. According to these authors this is the decisive factor which allows to explain the verbal morphology of impersonal passives in terms analogical to those employed in explaining the verbal morphology of passive constructions. While Perlmutter (1978) does not contest the view that impersonal passives should be provided with an analysis akin to that of passive constructions, he objects to the idea of spontaneous demotion. According to Perlmutter (1978) impersonal passives involve the advancement of dummy nominals to subjecthood. Thus, the only difference between passives and impersonal passives would be that the first ones involve the advancement to subjecthood of initial direct objects (i.e. direct objects present in the initial, semantically most relevant strata in the representations of these constructions) while the latter ones involve the advancement to subjecthood of noninitial

dummy nominal direct objects (i.e. direct objects not present in the initial, semantically most relevant strata in the representations of these constructions). In both cases any demotion of initial subjects would have to be triggered by the advancement of another nominal to subjecthood, i.e. spontaneous demotion is nonexistent. Perlmutter (1978) claims that his advancement analysis of impersonal passives is superior to the earlier proposed demotion analysis because, when combined with the Unaccusative hypothesis and the 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law, it is capable of explaining why in Dutch impersonal passives with initially unaccusative predicates are ungrammatical while impersonal passives with initially unergative predicates are quite acceptable. Unlike earlier analyses, Perlmutter's (1978) account correctly rules out stratal diagrams like (1) and specifies well formed diagrams like (2).

(1)



(2)



(1) corresponds to Dutch (3) while (2) to Dutch (4).

(3)\* Er werd door dat blok hout goed gabrand'  
'It was burnt well by that block of wood'

(4) Er wordt door de kinderen op het ijs geschaatst  
'It is skated by the children on the ice'

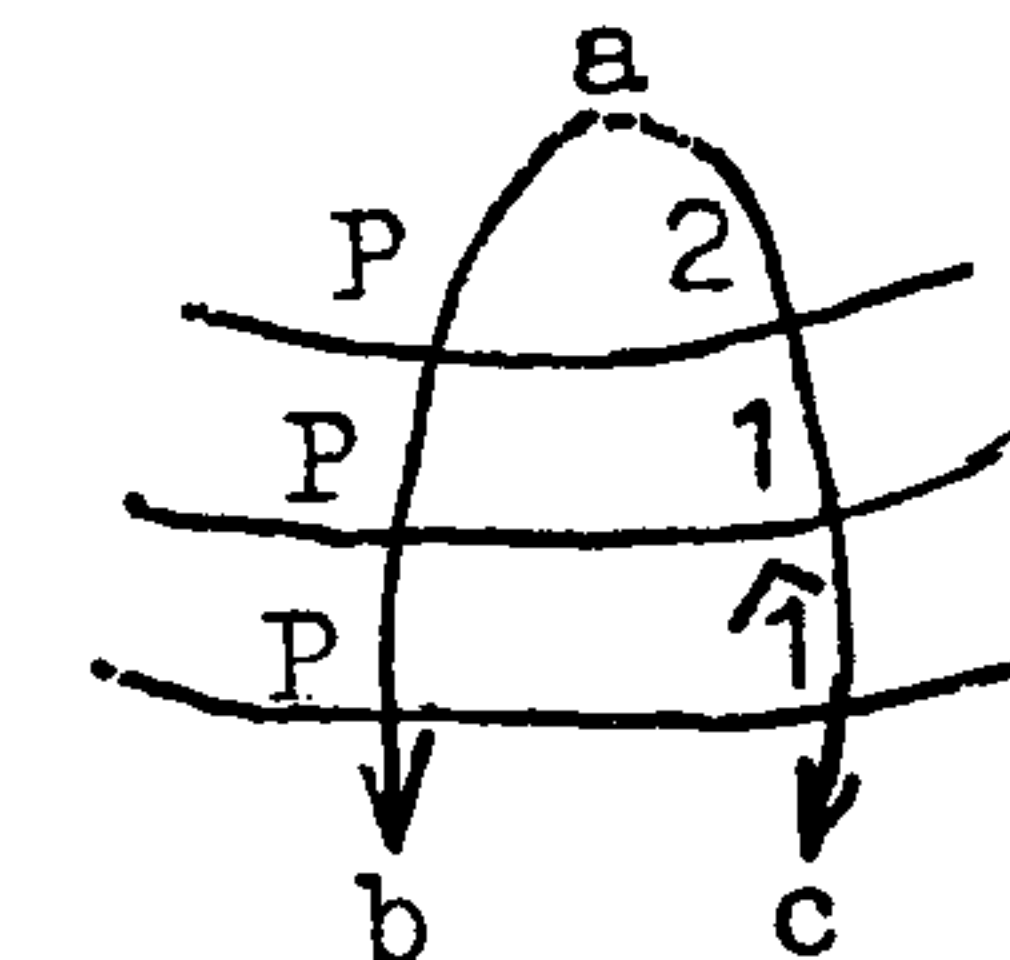
Examples like (3) are according to the Unaccusative Hypothesis initially unaccusative (i.e. in their initial strata they have direct objects and no subjects). This is the reason why one advancement to subject would be required in cases like (3). Dummy nominal advancement purported for impersonal passives would require another advancement to subject, this time of the dummy nominal. 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law would allow the advancement of the dummy nominal in (4), which is initially unergative, and would block it in (3). This is so because examples like (3) would seem to require double advancement to subjecthood unlike examples like (4). Thus, Perlmutter (1978) feels at liberty to conclude that the advancement analysis of impersonal passives is superior to Comrie's (1977) demotion analysis.

Wachtel (1979) shows that Perlmutter's (1978) conclusion was premature since it partly rested on taking for granted the 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law. According to Wachtel (1979) the 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law may be superseded by the 1-Advancee Preservation Law (5) which has all the desirable consequences of the 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law but does not require the presence of dummy nominals and therefore may corroborate an analysis of impersonal passives based on spontaneous demotion.

(5) *The 1-Advancee Preservation Law*: Any clause C that contains a non-1-arc for a nominal N in stratum  $c_k$  of C, a 1-arc for N in stratum  $c_{k+1}$  of C, and a 1-arc for N in stratum  $c_{k+n}$  of C, where  $n > 1$ , is ill-formed.

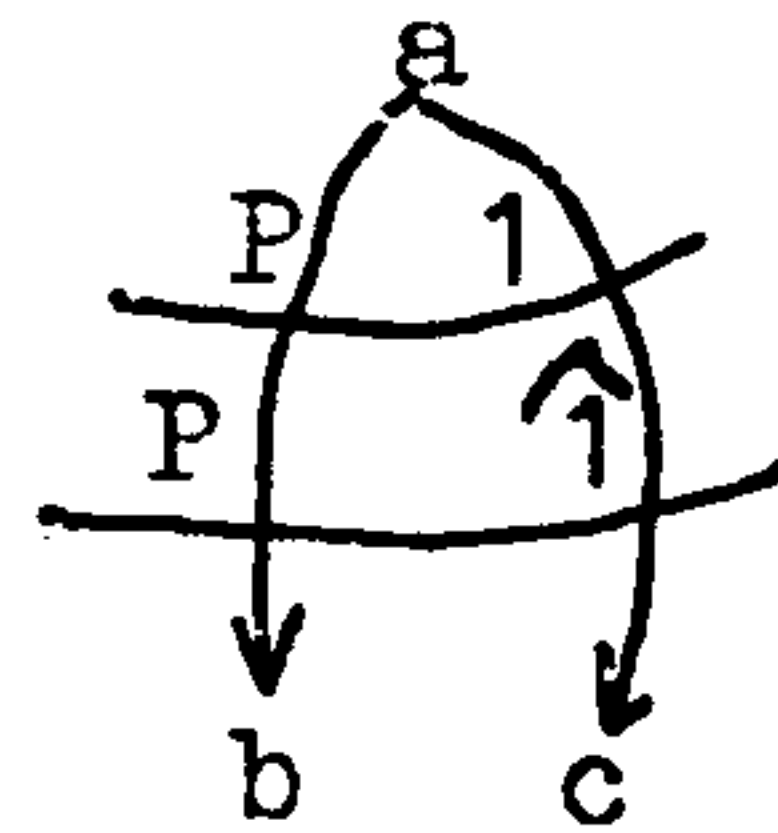
According to Wachtel (1979) a sentence like (3) would correspond to a stratal diagram like (6) which contradicts the 1-Advancee Preservation Law by virtue of demoting a nominal previously promoted to subjecthood.

(6)



(4) would correspond to (7), well-formed according to the 1-Advancee Preservation Law.

(7)



Unlike Perlmutter (1978) Wachtel (1978) does not need to rely on the presence of dummy nominals in postulated stratal diagrams to explain the grammaticality of (4) and ungrammaticality of (3). While Wachtel (1979) does not prove that his variant of demotion analysis is superior to Perlmutter's (1978) advancement analysis, since both analyses appear to be completely equivalent in their predictions, he does claim that pending any further data, his analysis is preferable on grounds of elegance, i.e. is favoured by Ockham's razor.

Neither of the two analyses of impersonal passives is capable of providing a comprehensive account of Polish impersonal constructions. As Neubauer (1979) noticed, Polish impersonal constructions, if analyzed as impersonal passives along Perlmutterian lines, must flagrantly violate the 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law. That this must be the case is clearly exemplified by cases like (8).

(8) Obecnie często umiera się na raka

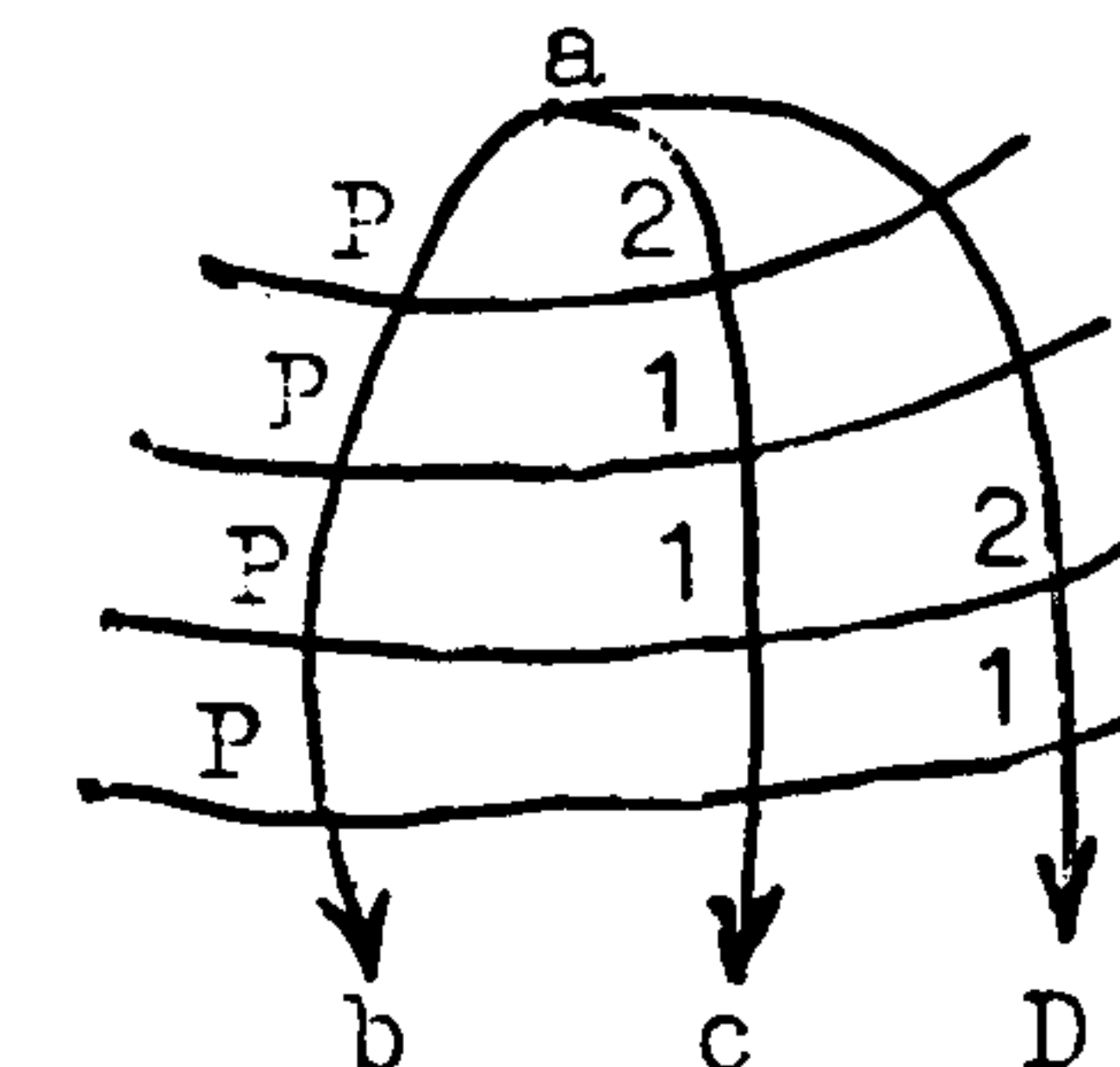
'Nowadays often die self on cancer=Nowadays people often die of cancer'

Data like (8) puts any adherent of Relational Grammar in the uncomfortable situation of having to claim that either constructions like (8) are not impersonal passives (thus by-stepping the entire issue) or that 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law is not valid. Neubauer (1979) chooses the former option and in doing so loses a natural explanation for the presence of *się* in (8) and examples similar to it. Any advancement analysis of impersonal passives can easily account for the presence of *się* by invoking dummy nominals which upon being promoted to subjecthood leave a reflexive copy behind (similarly to reflexive passives and inchoatives). Abandonment of dummy nominal advancement analysis is equivalent with the abandonment of the handy explanation for the presence of elements like *się*. This is the reason why neither Neubauer (1979) nor Wachtel (1979) is capable of providing any reason for the presence of *się* in Polish impersonal constructions and hence neither of the two accounts would provide a comprehensive analysis of Polish impersonal constructions.

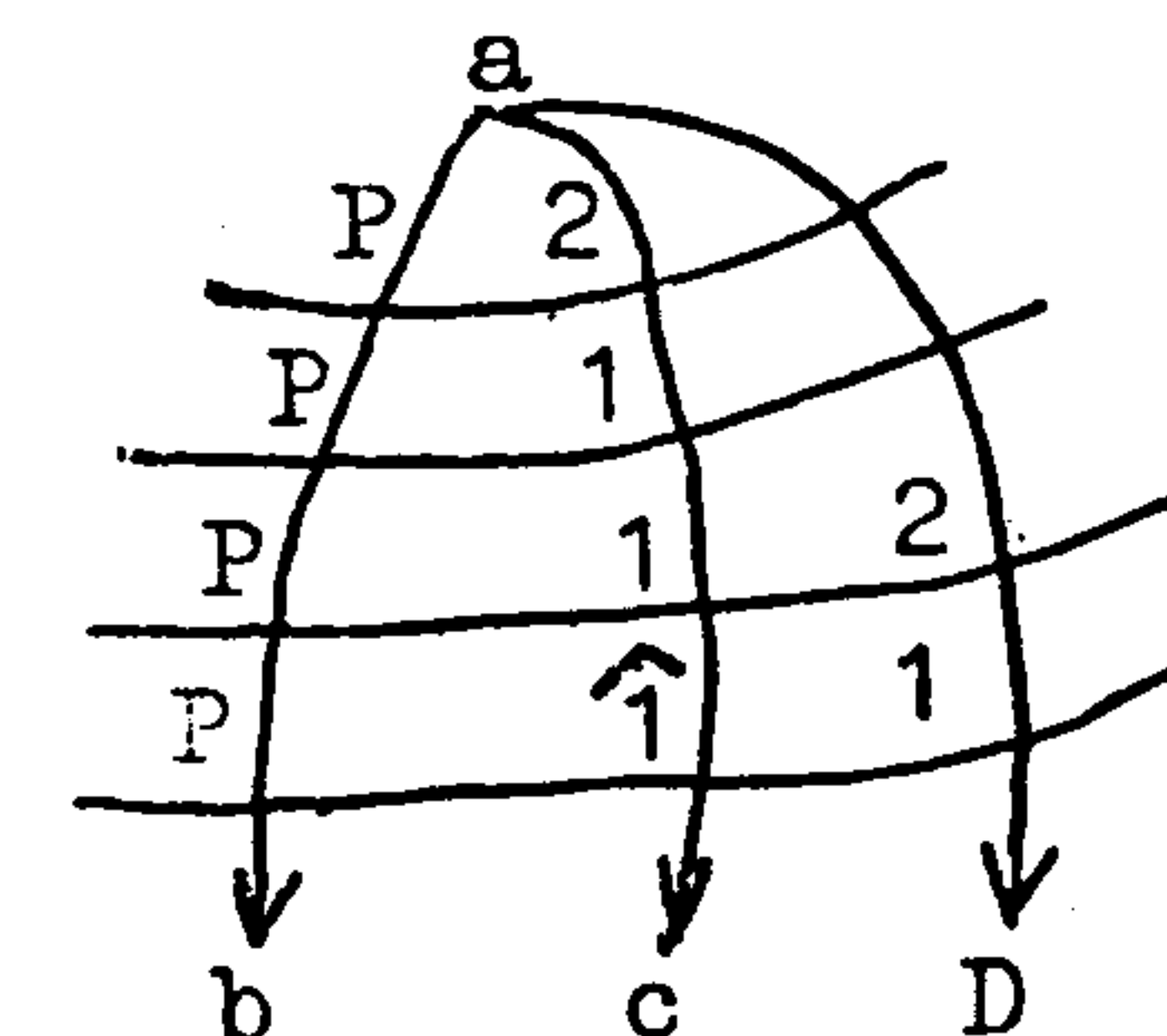
Kubiński (1984) takes the opposite stance claiming that Polish impersonal constructions are impersonal passives and should be analyzed along the lines proposed by Perlmutter (1978) for impersonal passives. In taking this option Kubiński (1984) retains a straightforward explanation for the presence of pseudo-reflexive *się* in the discussed constructions but must forsake the 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law. Thus, in its classical form, Perlmutter's advancement analysis is also inadequate to deal with Polish data.

If the 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law must go down the drain how can one hope to explain the facts connected with Perlmutter's (1978) Dutch examples within a dummy nominal advancement analysis? It seems that the only option left is to claim that an advancement analysis of impersonal passives may neatly account for both Polish and Dutch data only if coupled with the 1-Advantee Preservation Law. A stratal diagram like (9) could then correspond to Polish structures like (8) while (10) would correspond to Dutch examples like (3).

(9)



(10)



(9) clearly does not violate the 1-Advancee Preservation Law (the initial direct object nominal promoted to subjecthood is ultimately *erased* and not *chômeurized* while (10) is equally clearly at variance with the 1-Advancee Preservation Law. Thus, Polish example (8) would be classified as well-formed while Dutch (3) would be ruled out by the grammar. Characteristically, Polish impersonal passives never cooccur with *chômeurized* subjects while Dutch impersonal passives may do so, as conveniently shown in (4). Given the above observations, it would seem to follow that languages which, like Dutch, allow *chômeurization* of subjects in impersonal passives, should in principle disallow impersonal passives with initially unaccusative predicates. On the other hand, languages like Polish, which do not allow *chômeurization* of subjects in impersonal constructions, should by virtue of this fact be immune to the 1-Advancee Preservation Law and therefore should possess impersonal passive constructions with initially unaccusative predicates. If this conclusion was confirmed by data from other languages, the proposed here analysis of impersonal passives would be on much safer grounds. Polish data seems to favour on the one hand the advancement analysis of impersonal passives (the presence of *się* in impersonal constructions) and on the other hand the 1-Advancee Preservation Law (examples like (8)). It is therefore only logical to attempt to combine elements of the two different analyses. Pending more conclusive evidence it may be provisionally maintained that the argument based on the Polish data overrides Wachtel's (1979) elegance considerations. Thus, provided that strong arguments to the contrary are not found, the proposed here hybrid of a solution to the problem of impersonal passives seems to be marginally more adequate than the two earlier juxtaposed solutions.

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