THE EXCLAMATION MARK "!" IN KISWAHILI

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0.1   INTRODUCTION

The exclamation mark in Kiswahili occurs in conjunction with either specific parts of speech or established syntactic or phonological structures. On the level of parts of speech it is associated with interjections, such as <u>Lo! Amekufa</u>, thus

$$Ex_p \longrightarrow [itj] \; / \; !$$

On the syntactic level it involves the vocative case role and the imperative, cf. <u>Asha! Vipi? Njoo</u>! thus

$$Ex_s \longrightarrow \left[\left\{ \begin{matrix} voc \\ imp \end{matrix} \right\} \right] \; / \; !$$

On the phonological level it occurs together with the imperative intonation, for example pattern $\{< \{41\}$, pika, ! $>\}$; vocative intonation, for instance pattern $\{< \{244\}$ Hamisi, !$>\}$ or emphatic intonation, for example pattern $\{< \{3^41\}$, kamwe, !$>\}$, thus

$$Ex_i \longrightarrow \left[\left\{ \begin{matrix} 41 \\ \cdots \\ 244 \\ \cdots \\ 3^41 \\ \cdots \end{matrix} \right\} \right] \; / \; \{ \, ! \, \}$$

These basic applications of the exlamation mark as expressed by the traditional grammar may be redefined with the help of a pragmatic grammar. This is the aim of this paper.

1. INTERJECTION AND EXCLAMATION MARK

According to traditional grammar, any interjection in Swahili constitutes an invariable function word, applied as positional variant. In a pragmatic grammar it belongs to the category of speech/text signals, functioning as a variable modal particle. That is, its meaning varies according to the given speech situation. Shift in meaning of a modal particle during a speech act is achieved by means of sentence melody, intonation or stress which shape its spoken form. Therefore its written form is either basic or extended (derived), cf. e expressing astonishment, surprise, e-e-e-e - urging for caution, eeee - a) discovering a deception b) assent (Mohamed 1974:29). The latter forms are homonyms in written form and therefore their meaning is conditioned by the context in opposition to their spoken forms which differ in intonation and cannot be treated as tonic homonyms. As a result, the illocutionary character of homonymous modal particles has to be deduced from their context, since a dictionary would fail, cf. Ee! int. O - invocation or assent (Johnson 1939:80), or ee! Interj oh! (Hoeftmann 1979:53).
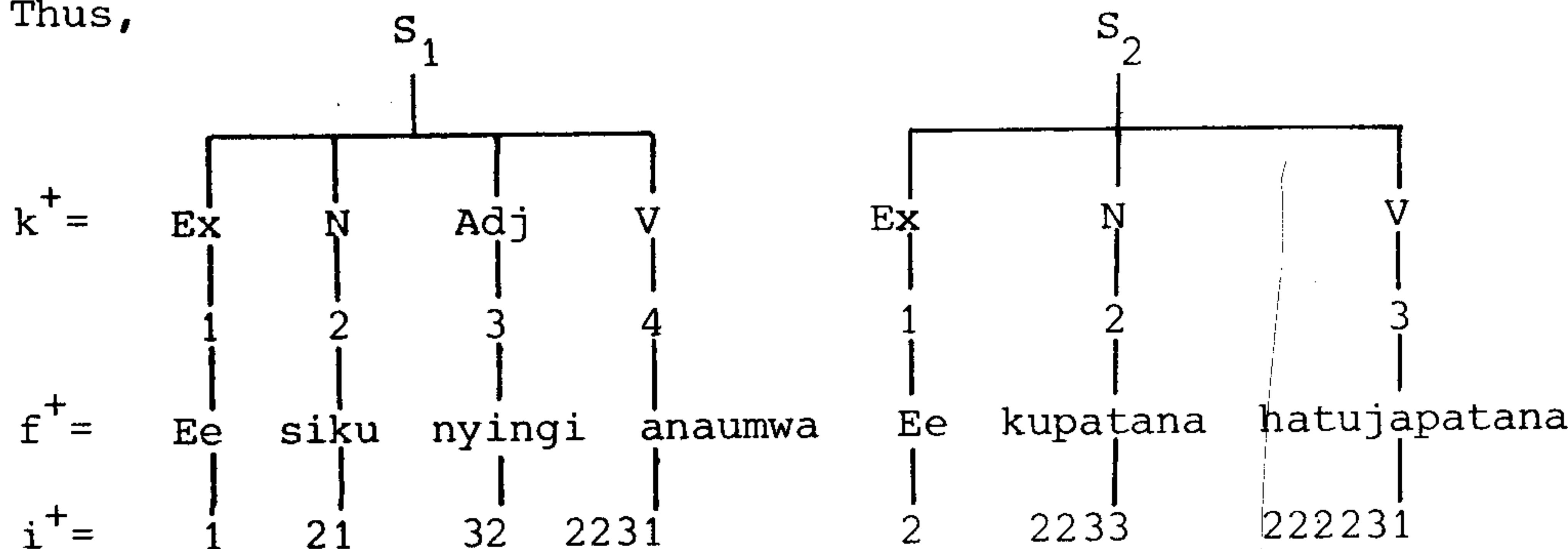
According to traditional grammars, an interjectior may function as an exclamative in an exclamatory (sentence). This statement is too general. It is useful to divide text signals into external and internal signals. External text signals constitute particle sentences under the condition that they occur together with (are closed by) a full stop or exclamation mark, cf. the modal particle ee, expressing assent, for example[1]

    (1)   "Kwani alikuwa anaumwa?" "Ee. Siku nyingi anaumwa."

or negation, cf.

    (2)   "Ee! Kupatana hatujapatana."

Thus,

$k^+ =$	S_1				S_2		
	Ex	N	Adj	V	Ex	N	V
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3
$f^+ =$	Ee	siku	nyingi	anaumwa	Ee	kupatana	hatujapatana
$i^+ =$	1	21	32	2231	2	2233	222231

We may establish the following rule: The use of the modal particle ee + exclamation mark (henceforth Ex) conditions the perlocutionary act. That is, if an Ex directly co-occurs with an exclamative then the following sentence should be negative in expression. However the same result may be achieved through ee functioning as an internal signal, cf.

(3)   "Ee, ndugu yangu! Kukosana ndiyo hali ya dunia"

(4)   "Ee - shemeji! Hapana, shemeji! Hapana"

In (3) and (4) the Ex has been separated from the text signal by a tertiary constituent (ndugu yangu, shemeji) and the latter from the modal particle through text punctuation, that is in spoken form - a pause, which functions as a hesitation marker. The Ex suggests a vocative intonation of the exclamatory. However, because of the text punctuation (comma, hyphen), this intonation does not function as a suprasegmental unit of the sentence. Both the exclamative and the tertiary constituent carry a separate high tonic, though in the negative exclamatory (4) it is on a higher level. Unfortunately, in a written text this difference does not appear. This fact may lead to the conclusion that the co-occurrence of an Ex with a modal particle is irrelevant for the interjective meaning of the latter, since its sign vehicle works its meaning into a sentence on its own, according to the mood of expression. This may be demonstrated by further modal particles such as ah, cf. expression of irritation, impatience

(5)   "Ah, nauliza tu"

(6)   "Ah! Hivyo hivyo tu"

As a result there are at least three solutions given:

a)   The Ex could be treated as a break (pause) sign and the modal particle as a pause filler, as exemplified by

(7)   "Mm! Unanidanganya!"

b)   The Ex serves only as a stress marker, and the modal particle as an empty alternative sign vehicle, cf. (4) or

c) The status of indigenous exclamatives could be based on formally distinct features, for example lo does not appear in European languages, but ah, oh do. However they should also be treated as variables and variants, since they can be extended, cf. lo in

    (13)   Lo! Na wala haupiti muda!

    (14)   Loo! Jamani!

    (15)   Loh, maskini.

Also their meaning is not restricted, cf. Ehee! Int. of assent (Johnson 1939:81), but

    (16)   "Sasa atazikwa hivyo hivyo bila kukoshwa?
             Ehee! Tena unanikumbusha"

where ehee! suggests just the opposite: "exactly, so it would be, but it cannot happen!"

There is, however, no doubt that the particle sentence whether it employs an interjection or a modal particle, has to agree in mood with the adjoining sentence/ utterance. For instance, the interaction of both categories may occur in a polite and in an excited dialogue. Consequently the text punctuation conforms to the mood of expression and imposes, through inversion, the proper tonic level on the particle sentence, independently of the category of the particle (interjection or modal particle), cf.

    (17)a "Ee. Siku nyingi anaumwa." b. "Loo. Pole,
           kaka yangu."

    versus

    (18)a "Ebo! unaleta tafsiri, sasa!" b. "Ah! Nyie
           kama hamziki shauri lenu."

Thus,

$$(17)\text{a. } f^+ = \{ \ <\ 1,ee,\#>,\ <\ 2,\ siku\ >\ ,\ <\ 3,\ nyingi\ >\ ,<4,\ anaumwa,\ \#\ >\}$$

$$\text{b. } f^+ = \{ \ <\ 1,loo,\#>,\ <\ 2,\ pole,\#>,\ <\ 3,\ kaka>\ ,\ <\ 4,\ yangu,\ \#\}$$

$$\text{a. } i^+ = \{ \ <\ 1,\{2\},\#>,\ <2,\{32\}\ >\ ,\ <\ 3,\{32\}\ >\ \ ,\ <4,\{2231\}\ ,\ \#\}$$

97

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    a. $i^+ = \{ < 1,\{2\},\#>, <2,\{32\} > , < 3,\{32\} > , <4,\{2231\} , \#>\}$

97

b. $i^+=$ $\{<$ 1,$\{2\}$,#>, <2,$\{32\}$,#> , < 3,$\{32\}$ > , <4,$\{31\}$, #>$\}$

but

(18) a. $f^+=$ $\{$<1,ebo,#> , <2,unaleta> , <3,tafsiri,#> , <4, sasa,#>$\}$

b. $f^+=$ $\{$<1,ah, #> , <2,nyie > , <3,kama >, <4, hamziki>, <5,shauri>, <6,lenu,#>$\}$

a. $i^+=$ $\{$<1, $\{41\}$, #>,<2, $\{2233\}$ >, <3, $\{232\}$, #>, <4, $\{41\}$,#>$\}$

b. $i^+=$ $\{$>1, $\{4^1\}$, #>,<2, $\{44\}$ >, <3, $\{22\}$, <4,$\{233\}$ >, <5, $\{32\}$ >, <6,$\{31\}$, #>$\}$

2. THE EXCLAMATORY AND THE EXCLAMATION MARK

a)   In a written text the exclamatory occurs within three strata: the author's comment, the dialogue and the monologue. It seems obvious that if the author makes use of the vocative, exclamative or he narrates, for instance that the character shouts, an Ex has to be expected. However it is not the rule, cf.

(19)   Ghafla alisikia yowe la kike, "kuna mtu," huku mlango ukisukumwa kwa nguvu kutoka ndani.

(20)   "Nini?" "Njoo mara moja."

(21)   Alipofika tu akaanza kuwika, "hodi nyumba hii."

(22)   Baadae ndipo mmoja alimwitikia, "we pita tu, bwana."

We may conclude that if the text were recited, the imperative intonation, for example, would be suppressed by the sentence melody, that is in the same way as a word

stress is suppressed by a suprasegmental feature. This may suggest that the employment of a sentence such as (20) without an Ex deprives the imperative of its status as an exclamatory, and consequently, of its imperative intonation. This may be explained by the fact that the author treated (20) as a semantic unit, that is, a request, but not as an imperative (a syntactic unit).

b)   The textual environment of an Ex may be neutral, indirectly implicative or directly implicative.

i)   A neutral environment does not suggest that an Ex will be employed and therefore no suprasegmental feature (exclamative tone pattern) must be expected. Among neutral verbs of this environmental type sema is mostly used in an introductory sentence, cf.

> (23)   ... Sauti nyingine iliyosema, "bwana!
> Nini mnaelezana saa hii!"

> (24)   Ndipo agonga tena na kusema, "Nifungulie
> basi, umefungwa!"

> (25)   Lakini kitu kingine nacho kikasema, "La!
> Siwezi kukuacha uteseke tu..."

cf. also

> (26)   Mara kwa mara washabiki wakimpandisha mori
> kwa kumwambia "Pasua, baba! Pasua!"

i)   Within an indirectly implicative environment the mployed verba dicendi and essendi suggest that an Ex ight be expected, cf.

> (27)   Mateso naye anaingilia, "kwani alisema
> kafa!"

> (28)   Ndipo Kizee anamsihi, "nadhani ukaze moyo,
> mwanakwetu!"

> (29)   Halafu anadokeza, "hamjamnyoa nywele!"

also environments which do not implicate a speech , but might suggest an exclamatory due to the narrated ion, for instance.

(30) Akamshika bega na kumtikisa taratibu.
      "Vipi!" "Uko macho, kumbe!"

(31) Hapa Mama Kere anamsukuma kando. "Loo,
      shemeji! Hivyo makamo hayo bado unaogopa!"

(32) Mama Kere anastuka. "Unasemaje!"

This function can be directly imposed by an exclamatory
as introductory sentence, cf.

(33) Na anaonekana ana kipande cha wasiwasi!
      Vipi, wenzetu mbona tunasikia kilio!"

Both environments may also interact, cf.

(34) Ndipo anatikisa kichwa kwa dharau ana-
      sonya. "Makabwera! Damn fools!"

iii) The directly implicative environment makes use
of exclamatory verbs, cf.

(35) "Deta!" anaita.

(36) Mara Baba Tabu alipaaza sauti, "twende
      zetu, bwana!"

(37) Ghafla Ben alimsikia dada mwuzaji
      mwingine akiwaitilia watu fulani njiani,
      "mnapita tu kama hamtujui!"

     The relations between the Ex and the environments
mentioned above are not well arranged, that is they often
do not explicitly suggest the use of an Ex. The function
of àn Ex, however, becomes again clear if we transform
the given written text into a spoken text. A performer
would have to take into consideration the whole fragment
or at least the adjoining exclamatory and the circumstance
of its employment in order to choose the proper intonation
pattern of both. It means that the Ex on the one hand
fulfils the function of a text punctuation/break, on the
other hand - of a text signal/speech signal. For example,

(38) "Ni we kweli!" Ben alimtania Mama Pweli.

(39) "Ah! Mume kitu naye! Kutwa kulewa tu,"
      Mama Sango alijipendekeza

(30)   Akamshika bega na kumtikisa taratibu.
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where the modality of <u>tania</u> and <u>jipendekeza</u> demands either an abrupt fall of the high tonic level after the Ex and the lowering of the adjoining sentence melody, or the suppression of the high tonic level of the exclamatory whereby, however, the stress order becomes more prominent.

On the contrary, a rising of the tonic levels can be observed in a sequence based on a direcly implicative environment, expressing for example an increasing feeling of anger; <u>kemea</u> and <u>nyamaza</u> occur with a stress which is stronger than the main word stress:

> (40)   "Kelele", Mama yake alimkemea huku akim-
>   nyamazisha kwa kofi la shavuni. "Kelele!
>   Mkubwa mzima unakojoa kitandani!"

whereby the rising and falling of the tonic level is due to the applied Ex.

c)   The Ex fulfils several other functions during a speech act. For instance, it can turn a question into an exclamatory i) directly, cf.

> (41)   Na Ben aliuliza, "nani!"

and ii) indirectly, cf.

> (42)   "Unataka kuniambia nini sasa!"

> (43)   "Wiki ya ngapi hii vinaozea sandukuni!"

> (44)   "Kutuliza mawazo gani, bwana!"

The fact that the interrogative words in (41)-(44) are stressed and slightly extended does not uphold the structure of these sentences as questions because it is the EX which transformed them into exclamatories.

With the help of Ex a writer can introduce a rhythmical arrangement of a text in order to create, for example a climate of suspense, cf. in a monologue:

> (45)   "Amekufa au amelala?" "Amekufa." "Mama
>   Vena amekufa! Deta amekufa! Amekufa au
>   amelala?"

or in a horror scene, cf.

(46)   Maskini Deta macho yangali yamemtoka,
        meno yangali yamekatana! "Mama Vena!"
        Ben ajaribu kumwita. Kimya. "Deta!"
        anaita tena. Kimya! Kuinua mguu unao-
        ning'ina - umegoma; tena mzito ajabu!
        Kumshika kifuani hakuna mapigo ya moyo;
        tena pa baridi, maskini!

The alternation of the sentence intonation is based
on text punctuation and the flow of the sentence melody.
However it is the Ex serving as text signal which is
conducive to the creation of a climate assumed by the
writer.

Another stylistic effect can be achieved through
the repetition of a phrase as an exclamatory, cf.

(47)   Lakini amenyamaza tu. Amenyamaza!

(48)   ... Na kadhalika... Na kadhalika!...

In (47)-(48) the Ex suggests an emphatic tone
pattern rather than an exclamatory one.

The Ex can establish the duration of the same tonic
level, cf.

(49)   "Kutuliza mawazo gani, bwana! Usinifanye
        mjingá, bwana! Tena nakuuliza unasema
        "amekufa!"

The employment of parenthetical words, as under
(49), supports the whole tonic pattern of this fragment,
since they carry the final intonation contour. A
parenthesis strengthened by an exclamatory can fulfil
several functions such as emphasize a mood, for example

i)   surprise, cf.

(50)   Akaurudisha (mkono - R.O.) kwenye nguo
        aliyokuwa amejifunika usiku ule akaona
        imelowa - chapa!

ii)   sympathy, cf.

(51)   Kumbe nisingekuwapo ndugu yangu ange-
        adhirika kweli, maskini!

iii)   ignorance, helplessness, cf.

> (52)   Fikira maalimu anayekuwa kila Ijumaa
>   kufukizia ubani nyumba nzima na kusoma-
>   soma nini sijui!

The Ex is helpful in the case of expressing tension in a short form. The simplest form is an interjection in parenthesis, cf.

> (53)   "Sijui kuondoka kwa mwenzio ni furaha gani,
>   ya rabi!"

or which may be employed in an elliptical expression, cf.

> (54)   "Lakini tena - ya rabi, maskini!"

The most expressive form consists of a particle cluster or compound particle sentence which contains a modal particle and interjection, cf.

> (55)   "Lakini kumbe - loh, maskini!"

> (56)   "Lakini ... aisee! Hebu simama kidogo, Ben."

The intonation patterns of these units are characterized by abruptly rising and falling tone, based on two tonic groups.

d)   It happens that the Ex is unable by itself to bring into relief the necessary emphasis. In such a case the given word can be extended, cf.
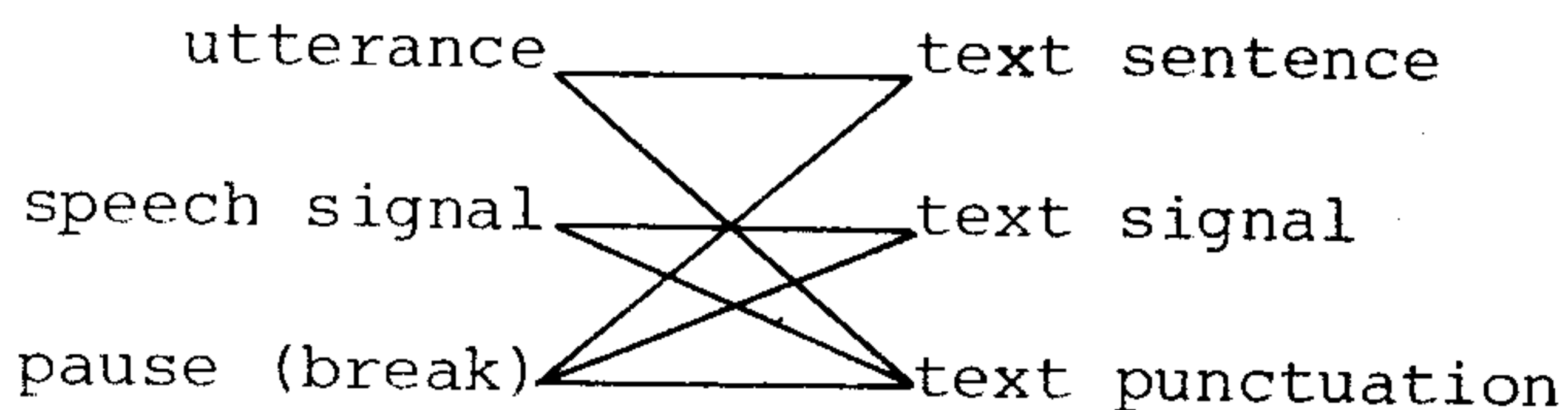
> (57)   "Uongo au kweli?" "Kweliii!" "Uongo au
>   kweli?" "Kweeliiiii!"

or even replace the Ex through capital letters, cf.

> (58)   Watu kadhaa wanaitikia "NDIYOOO" kwa sauti
>   kubwa sana.

CONCLUSIONS

The function of the exclamation mark "!" in Swahili should be interpreted as an interaction of phonological and textual units, according to a pragmatic grammar, cf.

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utterance ———————— text sentence
                  ╲  ╱
speech signal ——————  ——————— text signal
                  ╱  ╲
pause (break) ———————— text punctuation
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According to our above considerations the exclamation mark cannot be mechanically assigned to function as a simple punctuation mark, realized as a pause (break) during a speech act. It also does not mean that an exclamation mark regularly co-joins an interjection as recorded by Swahili dictionaries. The latter dependence results only from the application of a given particle as interjection or modal particle. Taking into account that an exclamation mark cannot fulfil a function of a self-supporting linguistic unit,[2] it should be treated as a semantic marker, a sort of qualifier of a particular sentence or a whole utterance. Therefore it functions as a speech/text signal which may, and often does, affect the suprasegmental features of a sentence, expressing, for instance, fear, despair, joy or strong opinion. Hence, the terms exclamation, exclamative, exclamatory or vocative, imperative or emphatic (vigorous) intonation are not sufficient to interpret the semantic value of an exclamation mark.

However it belongs to those linguistic items which cannot be verbally expressed during a speech act. The exclamation mark is represented in a speech act basically by a break, but at the same time it is contained in a given sentence melody, intonation and stress. The question remains, whether in a written text, within which the exclamation mark occurs in the form of a single sign "!", is it able to express its semantic values? We suggest that the answer to this question depends on the stylistic values of a text, that is, on the ability of a writer to combine all types of signs in a meaningful expressive way.

FOOTNOTES

1.   All illustrative examples from Zika Mwenyewe by Alex Banzi (Dar es Salaam 1977, Tanzania Publishing House), which constitutes a particularly grateful testing ground.

2.   Even in a comic-strip it must be attached to a
      drawing depicting a character whose mental stage
      it expresses.

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