An incremental account of the light verb *piga* in Swahili
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The East African Bantu language Swahili employs a light verb construction based on the verb *piga*. In its transitive usage, *piga* means 'hit', as can be seen in example (1) below. However, *-piga* also frequently combines with nominal forms to render a range of meanings. An example is shown in (2), while further *piga* + Noun combinations are shown in (3).

(1) Asha   a-li-m-piga   Juma kwa fimbo
     Asaha SM1-PAST-OM1-hit   Juma PREP 9.stick
     'Asha hit Juma with a stick'

(2) A-li-piga   mbio
     SM1-PAST-hit   10.speed
     'S/he ran'
     lit. 'S/he hit speed'

(3) a. kupiga pasi   'to iron'   pasi 'iron'
     b. kupiga mwayo   'to yawn'   mwayo 'yawn'
     c. kupiga rangi   'to paint'   rangi 'colour, paint'
     d. kupiga mswaki 'to brush your teeth'   mswaki 'toothbrush'
     e. kupiga magoti   'to kneel'   magoti 'knees'
     f. kipiga makofi   'to clap'   makofi 'palms'

Under the Dynamic Syntax (DS, Kempson et al. 2001, Cann et al. 2005) approach, the use of *piga* 'hit' in (1) can be modelled as a transitive verb which constructs and annotates a ?Ty(e→e→t) node, as well as building the associated argument node. See for example Marten (2001), Marten & Kempson (2002) Gibson & Marten (2016).

    However, the Verb+Noun combination exemplified in (2) and (3) present a challenge for formal modelling. From the DS perspective, analysing these uses as constructing a ?Ty(e→e→t) node and its associated argument node does not yield the correct interpretation since the nominal is not an object of a transitive predicate. Instead, the interpretation is the result of the 'idiomatic' meaning associated with the *piga* +Noun combination, which regularly results in an intransitive predicate.

    This talk develops a Dynamic Syntax account of the modelling of the *piga* construction found in Swahili. The analysis harnesses the concepts of underspecification and update which lie at the heart of the framework. It is argued that the differences in structure building that result from these different uses of *piga* must stem from the lexical entry with which it is associated and the attendant process of tree growth, thereby reflecting the centrality of context-dependence in the framework.

References
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