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INDONESIAN CAUSAL CONJUNCTIONS: GRAMMATICALIZATION WITHOUT CHANGE OF FORM¹

Indonesian (Malayo-Polynesian < Austronesian) has a number of causal conjunctions. The present study is focused on *karena* and *sebab*, since both of them are largely used in spoken and written discourse. Both conjunctions can select for clause or a noun (1, 4–5).

- (1) *banyak orang mati karena / sebab penyakit itu*
many human die because because illness that
'Many people died because of the disease.' [Sneddon 1996: 226]

karena and *sebab* are unusual in that they are not only causal conjunctions, but also lexical words, meaning 'cause' or 'reason' [Stevens, Schmidgall-Tellings 2010]. This is exemplified in (2–3).

- (2) *Itu=lah sebab-nya!*
that=EMPH because-3SG
'That was the reason! That's why!' [Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings 2010]
- (3) *Apa karena-nya maka begitu?*
what because-3SG and that.way
'Why did it turn out that way?' [Stevens & Schmidgall-Tellings 2010]

That is why they may be combined with yet another conjunction, *oleh* 'by'.

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- (4) **Oleh karena** tiket telah habis terjual, beberapa orang
by because ticket PST expire sold some human
telah mencoba menempuh masuk ke dalam stadion.
PST try rush enter to inside stadium
'Because the tickets were sold out, some people tried to force
their way into the stadium.' [Stevens, Schmidgall-Tellings 2010]
- (5) **Oleh sebab** itu, di-butuh-kan pengemudi bus yang
by because that PASS-need-APPL driver bus REL
sudah berpengalaman.
already experienced
'Therefore (= for that reason), the experienced bus drivers are
needed.' (<https://www.republika.co.id/berita/nasional/jabodetabek-nasional/17/05/15/opzr4s366-sopir-senior-akan-kemudikan-transjakarta-koridor-13>)

I suggest that *karena* and *sebab*, when used as conjunctions (1), are **grammaticalized items**. Their meaning has changed. I assume that, when used as conjunctions, *karena* and *sebab* are in fact two-place operators — just like the English conjunction *because*:

- (6) *CAUSE(p,q)* is true iff *p* is true, *q* is true, and *p* being true causes *q* to be true. (Kroeger (2018: 331) after Johnston 1994)

Still, no change of form has occurred, since the causal conjunctions are formally identical with lexical words meaning 'cause/reason'. This supports Berndt Heine's [2018] meaning-first hypothesis: according to him, the meaning changes first in grammaticalization. Further, as [Ansaldo et al. 2018] show, grammaticalization without change of form is characteristic of South-East Asian languages, which tend to have little morphology. Hence, the grammaticalization of *karena* and *sebab* may be qualified as an areal phenomenon.

References

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