If it exists in one language, why not use it in another?

The insertion of *kalau* 'if' in Abui and Central Lembata, two languages of Eastern Indonesia

Among the hundreds of local languages in Indonesia in contact with Malay, there are several cases reporting the insertion of the Malay conditional conjunction *kalau* into local languages (e.g van den Heuvel 2007; Nivens 1999). In this talk, we zoom in on two such case studies to understand the underlying mechanisms involved in this growing, converging trend. Presenting recent Abui (Papuan) and Central Lembata (Austronesian) data, we seek to answer the question of how two typologically different languages yield similar outcomes of contact. In particular, we expand on the simultaneous observation that Malay *kalau* is used in both languages, in conjunction with the native near-equivalent (a case of *doubling*, Muysken 2000:104–105). We show that its incorporation into the lexicon allows for an enhancement of clause-chaining possibilities in the repertoires of these speakers.

A similar time depth (60 to 70 years) of contact with a local, colloquial variety of Malay and/or Indonesian (henceforth MI) has fostered a comparable contact scenario among the Abui and Central Lembata speech communities. As a result, almost all speakers of Abui and Central Lembata below the age of 35 exhibit transfer effects from Malay into their local language. This has resulted in a large influx of, not only content words, but also function words, as the following examples show:

(1) Abui (Saad Corpus)[1]

Kalau	*ama*	*uisaha*	*loqu*	*di*	*pi-tanga*		*he-sakola*	*naha*	***maiye***,…
COND.MI	person	west	PL	3	1PL.IN.POSS-language		3.OBJ-learn	NEG	**COND**

'If westerners don't learn our language, (we shouldn't either?)'

(2) Central Lembata (Fricke Corpus)

Kalau	***ma***	*da*	*bukut-i,*	*[…]*	*kam*	*dapat*	*no*	*tapu*	*mirek*	*wai.*
COND.MI	**COND**	3PL	protect-3PL		1EX	get	OBJ	coconut	candlenut	some

'If they protected them [the little plants], they would get some coconuts and candlenuts.'

As can be seen, both languages have a native conditional conjunction, and yet there is a tendency to simultaneously insert the MI term. In the Abui case, the use of *kalau* has been found to be restricted to conditional readings, whereas *maiye* may license a broader set of functions including not only conditional but also temporal and causal relations. Thus, its insertion, and particularly its clause-initial position, allows speakers to instantly specify the nature of the desired clausal relation. The insertion of conjunctions to 'fill a gap' is a common process in contact among local languages in Indonesia (Bowden 2013) and other languages as well (Heine and Kuteva 2008:123). In Central Lembata, Malay *kalau* and local *ma* can both have conditional and temporal interpretations. Both terms, thus, cover the same functional range. A reason to insert *kalau* in Central Lembata could be that the word *kalau*, having a dysillabic structure, is more prominent than the native *ma.* In sum, we show how, despite typological differences between the two languages, the outcomes of contact remain similar. We conclude that the insertion of Malay *kalau* provides speakers with an additional resource to express a more salient conditional relation between two clauses, while also allowing for the retention of the local conjunctions. This talk sheds light on these on-going processes of change, which as Bowden (2013) points out, will probably affect hundreds of Eastern Indonesian languages in the near future.

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Heine, B., & Kuteva, T. (2005). Language contact and grammatical change. Cambridge University Press.

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[1] COND: conditional, MI: Malay/Indonesian, PL: plural, 3: third person, OBJ: object marker, NEG: negation, 1EX: first person exclusive,