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### Conflict Mitigation Strategies Between Employer and Indonesian Workers in Saudi Arabia

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#### **Abstract**

*This study investigates the strategies used by the Consular Functions Officer of the Indonesian Embassy in Riyadh in resolving conflicts between employers and Indonesian workers. Data is collected directly from recorded conversations by phone between the Consular Function Officer, the Indonesian Worker and the employer. The method used in collecting this data is refer to the free-engagement technique, recording technique and note-taking technique. So, the data that has been collected is transcribed and transliterated by the author. In the analysis, what the author focuses on is all requesting utterances which are indicated as a form of mitigation to solve a problem. There are 10 speech acts of requesting which is a form of mitigation. These forms are realized in two forms, interrogative which consist of 7 data and declarative consist of 3 data. Judging from the strategy, the mitigation carried out by the Consular Function Officer in the data includes four strategies: indirectness, affirmation, immediacy and hedge with two application patterns, single pattern and combination pattern. In addition, there is also a politeness scale principle used which includes a benefit scale, an option scale, an indirectness scale and a social distance scale.*

**Keywords:** *conflict mitigation, politeness strategy, requesting speech act*

#### **Introduction**

The problem of Indonesian Migrant Workers (TKI) in Saudi Arabia is an endless problem. Some of the common problems that often occur are workers who have lost contact for decades, unpaid salaries, abuse of visa, physical violence, criminal cases, sexual harassment and the death penalty (Kusuma, 2019).

One of the problems that most often occurs from the problems above is the problem of salaries. In various reports it is stated that this problem includes various derivative problems such as unilateral salary cuts, salary evasion for decades by employers and salary payments below the standard wage set by the government of 1,200 riyals (approximately 4.5 million rupiah) (Tuwo, 2020). This problem is certainly a very detrimental thing for Indonesian workers as well as a challenge for the Government of Indonesia in an effort to solve it.

The Indonesian government, which in terms of solving the problems of migrant workers in Saudi Arabia, is represented by its Ambassador in Riyadh, has a very important and strategic role. Its main duties and functions are to carry out consular functions and protect Indonesian citizens abroad. For this reason, the resolution of the problem of Indonesian workers is the responsibility of the Indonesian Embassy in Riyadh, including the problem of paying salaries for workers

In the process of resolving this issue, many conflicts between Indonesian workers and their employers are happened. This problem occurs due to the large number of Indonesian workers who ignore the procedures set by the Indonesian government, such as ignoring the

employment contract and the agreements in it. Therefore, they become the most disadvantaged and unprotected parties (Tranggana, 2019). Nevertheless, the government through its representatives, in this case the consular officers of the Indonesian Embassy in Riyadh, remains committed to provide legal and consular assistance to fight for the labor rights of Indonesian migrant workers.

In the legal process related to the settlement of salaries, the consular officers face many challenges. The various types and characters of employers with different cultural backgrounds are a problem in itself. It takes many strategies in solving one case. One of them is a strategy in communication.

Communication strategy can be understood as the ability of consular officials to communicate well with various parties outside themselves. It can also be understood as their ability to communicate their ideas and thoughts clearly, able to respond well to all advice, critics and refutation of their thoughts and performance, and able to express their ideas politely without hurting the feelings of the interlocutor.

Politeness should be given special attention because their polite speech will be able to improve the image of Indonesian Consular Officers at the global level and assist them in resolving conflicts between Indonesian Migrant Workers and their employers.

From the description above, this study will find the realization of the mitigation strategy carried out by the Consular Officer at the Indonesian Embassy in Riyadh to resolve conflicts between Indonesian Workers and their employers through a pragmatic approach. This approach is used to analyze the pragmatic power used by the Consular Officer in his speech. In pragmatic studies, a speaker will face a number of choices before making an utterance that violates the negative face or the positive face of the interlocutor in this case is the employer.

Through mitigation strategies, consular officers are required to save the face of the interlocutor as an act of politeness which is principally aimed at reducing the unpleasant consequences on the face of him, both positive and negative faces. Politeness directed towards the positive face of the interlocutor is called positive politeness, while politeness directed towards the negative face of the interlocutor is called negative politeness (Brown, 1987; Nadar, 2009). Through this strategy, conflicts that occur between employers and Indonesian workers, especially in the matter of salaries payment can be resolved properly.

Research related to mitigating conflicts that occur between Indonesian workers and employers so far has only focused on social, legal and political approaches (Firdausy 2010; Sagala, 2012; Sepriandi, 2018) and has not been widely studied with a linguistic approach, especially pragmatics. In addition, previous studies related to this issue with a pragmatic approach have also focused on short stories and novels data (Mansur, 2015; 2015) and have not examined many real conflicts that occur between Indonesian workers and employers who directly involve third parties such as consular officials as mitigator. Thus, the novelty in this study includes two main aspects, both are 1) The approach used is pragmatic which aims to describe the conflict mitigation strategies carried out by consular officials in dealing with the problem of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Saudi Arabia. 2) The object of the study is direct recorded data from consular officials containing conversations between three parties: employers, Indonesian workers and consular officials in mitigating conflicts related to salary payments.

## **Method**

This research is a qualitative research which in collecting data, the researcher uses the listening method with the free-involvement technique, recording technique and note-taking technique (Kesuma, 2007). this method is used to investigate the use of requesting speech

acts used by consular officers when contacting an employer of the Indonesian workers in order to resolve the ongoing problem. The recording is done by the Consular Officer himself and with the permission given by him, the researcher is allowed to download and reduce the data. The data that has been collected then transcribed, transliterated and written on the data card. Furthermore, the data analysis in this study focused on non-verbal forms of requesting which are mitigation speeches, in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. This study also uses several theories such as mitigation theory by Danet (1980 in Manshur 2015), (Fraser 1980), (Flowerdrew 1991), (Holmes 1984) and (Leech 1983).

## Results and Discussion

As mentioned in the research method, the focus of this study is the speech spoken by the Consular Officer of the Indonesian Embassy in Riyadh Saudi Arabia from the context of the background of his speech and interpreted based on mitigation tools that are universally followed in order to show politeness in speaking to the interlocutor.

These tools are universally applicable in the sense that they can be found and implemented in various language uses around the world, including Arabic. The following are some speech data that can be observed from the consular officer's mitigation strategy in resolving the case of salary payment that happened to one of the Indonesian female migrant workers who has worked with her employer for fifteen years and during that time has never returned to Indonesia.

1. Consular Officer (CO): *sayidah Wadchā... halo... Assalamu'alaikum sayyidah Wadchā, kaifa haal? Ana Hidayatullah, Na'aibul Konsul fii sifārah Indunisiyya bi Riyadh.... Ayywah... kaefa haal? Tamaam? Hal fii kbuthwah lil 'umrah? Hiya Ghalat lil'umrah wa laa laa?*

Based on the context, data (1) is the opening speech of a consular officer of the Indonesian Embassy in Riyadh who contacted Mrs. Wadchā, the employer of Indonesian Female Workers from Wonoyoso, Nur Faizah via telephone. This opening remark is a continuation of the conversation between consular officials who previously communicated with Indonesian migrant workers.

In data (1) it can be observed that the consular officer performed an indirect speech act asking about the news from the employer '*sayyidah Wadchā, kaifa haal?... 'Mrs. Wadcha, how are you?'*. This interrogative construction in plural Arabic culture is done as an ice breaker to initiate a communication. The use of the word *sayyidah* which means 'mistress' shows that the Consular Officer implements the Social Distance Scale in formal speech. This means that he positions his relationship with the speaker in an unfamiliar position.

Furthermore, the consular officer introduced himself as in the speech '*Ana Hidayatullah, Na'aibul Konsul fii sifārah Indunisiyya bi Riyadh*'. Which means 'I (Agus) Hidayatullah, Consular Officer of the Indonesian Embassy in Riyadh'. He even asked about his employer twice and confirmed this with the words '*tamām?*' 'healthy?'. In the speech, it can be seen that he as a speaker burdens himself with the greatest loss for the uncertainty he may receive from the interlocutor. On the other hand, the interlocutor is given the maximum advantage and flexibility by the speaker to respond to the contents of the speaker's speech.

In the speech '*Hal fii kbuthwah lil 'umrah? Hiya Ghalat lil'umrah wa laa laa?*' which means 'is there any plans for umrah? Can she go for Umrah or not?', the consular officer as a speaker again did an indirect speech. Through the use of interrogative constructions, the speaker actually asks the addressee to give permission to the female worker to be able to perform Umrah before returning to Indonesia. However, the speaker again gives the greatest advantage to the interlocutor to respond or not to respond to the contents of the speaker's speech. On the other hand, the speaker positions himself in a situation that threatens his

own face because there is a possibility that the speaker will not allow the female worker to go for umrah. In data (1), it is very clear the implementation of indirectness mitigation tools with the principle of benefit scale and optional scale.

2. CO: *Mit...miitaaa insya Allah tatrueh lil 'umrah?*

The use of the word *insya Allah* which means 'God willing' in data (2) is a syntactic device that shows a question tag and at the same time indirectness speech as a form of mitigation strategy. The speaker in the context of this speech wants the speaker's firmness regarding the permits required by female workers for her umrah departures. However, the speaker expresses it in an interrogative form, '*Mit...miitaaa insya Allah, tatrueh lil 'umrah?*' Which means 'when will she, God willing, go for Umrah?'. It can be observed from the data (2) the implementation of two indirectness mitigation strategies and question tags simultaneously with the principle of the indirectness scale and the optional scale.

3. CO: *'Asyan lil umrah laazim fii application tawakkalnaa waa albardhu fii absyiir kidzaa.... Ob...hooo.hooo... hal khalas 'indabaa.... Tawakkalnaa....wa absyir waa i'tamarnaa?*

In data (3) there is an immediacy mitigation strategy. The speaker in the context of this speech wants to close social distance by involving the interlocutor directly in the speaker's speech. The speaker in data (3) reveals that the management of the application for Umrah for the Indonesian female worker will be jointly arranged, which must personally have permission from the employer and administratively will be assisted by a consular officer.

4. CO: *baa... tamaaam.... Tamaaam kidzaa...aywaa.... 'Ailathaa yas'al itsnain ya'nii... wahid...eee...mitaa hiya tusaafir ilaa Indunisiyya... maafii musykilah lil ijaazab.... Maafi musykilah..... ijaazab faqoth maafii musykilah....*

5. CO: *aywaa... ijaazab faqoth maafii musykilah...ba'da kidzaa ruuhtanii ilaa hinaa.... ilaa Sa'udiyyaa....wa tsaaniyan raatib....wa tsaalitsan barduh... hal mumkin ana....'asyan....ihnaa ma'a haadzhi ....ma'aa NurFaaiizab... ihnaa fii nafsil qoryah fii Induuniisiyyaa.... Hal mumkin an azuunur ilaa hinaak.....illaa Nur Faizab.... Wa natacallam 'alaath-thuul....mubaasyarah ma'a Nur Faizab?*

The utterances in data (4) and (5) are substantially a series of utterances. In both data, speaker use directive speech acts. In the form of declarative speech, the speaker conveys two main things to be resolved in this case. First, regarding the permission request from the employer for her to return to Indonesia and second about her salary. From these two data, it can be observed that speaker use Hedges strategies such as the word '*Maafii musykilah*' which means 'no problem' in the context of the speech '*ijaazab faqoth maafii musykilah*'. The woman worker is permitted to return to Indonesia, because later administratively it will be assisted by speaker (Consular Officer). Speaker also use the word '*mumkin*' in the utterance '*Hal mumkin an azuunur ilaa hinaak.....illaa Nur Faizab.... Wa natacallam 'alaath-thuul....mubaasyarah ma'a Nur Faaiizab?*' which means 'may I be able to visit there (Mrs. Wadcha's house) to meet Nur Faizah and communicate directly with her?'. The use of two words is a mitigation strategy to complete permission for her return to Indonesia and payment of salaries.

6. CO: *'asyan fii...fiii mudzaakirah 'indinaa ....hiyaa saafir ilaa induniisiyya...fii haadzaa asy-syabr... robii'il awwal...laakin ba'da kidzaa.. ta'akbhor ilaa...mittaa? ilaa syawwaaal? Hal mumkin ta'aakbkhartanii... 'asyan syuff yaaa..*

Data (6) is an indirective speech act in the form of an interrogative. This utterance is actually used by speaker to ask permission from the employer so that the duration of vacation time in Indonesia can be extended. In the speaker's notes as recorded in the Indonesian Embassy database, it is stated that she will return to Indonesia in the month of *rabi'ul awwal*, but for the time of her return to Saudi, the Consular Officer asks for an additional time using indirectness and hedges strategies. This strategy can be observed in the utterance *'ta'akbhor ilaa...mittaa? ila syawwaaal? Hal mumkin ta'aakbkhartanii?'* which means 'how long does it take to return home? Until (month) Shawwal? can it be extended?'

7. CO: *haadza.... Khomsata 'asyar sanah yaaa Wadhchaa.....khomsata 'asyar sanah.....*

Data (7) is an indirective speech in declarative form. This statement is a logical reason for the speaker's request to the interlocutor because the Female Worker has worked at Mrs. Wadcha's house for fifteen years without ever returning to Indonesia. Through this speech, the speaker wants to convey that the duration of working time for Indonesian workers is very long and they should be given appropriate vacation time as well. This is shown in the utterance *'haadza.... Khomsata 'asyar sanah yaa Wadhchaa..... khomsata 'asyar sanah.....'* which means 'this (duration of work) has been fifteen years, Wadhchā... fifteen years'. In this speech, it can be stated that the speaker use the principle of indirectness.

8. CO: *Istisyaaar .... Kam ratibhaa syabriyyan 'alaa hiin?*

9. CO: *Ok.... Hal haadza khamsata 'asyar sanaab... hal raatib ma'ahaa? Il ayn wa laa ma'a min?*

Both data (8) and (9) are indirective speech acts with an interrogative form. What the speaker wants to convey in data (8) is to ensure that the salary of the female worker is paid regularly per month. This is shown in the expression *'Kam ratibhaa syabriyyan 'alaa hiin?'* 'How much is the salary per month now?'. While in data (9), the speaker wants to reveal that the salary of the migrant worker should not be delayed and should not be paid by the employer. This is shown in the speech *'hal raatib ma'ahaa? Il ayn wa laa ma'a min?'* which means 'Is the salary held by her? 'Where is the salary and who holds it?'. It can be observed in both data, speaker apply indirectness mitigation tools with the principle of benefit scale and optional scale.

10. CO: *fil awal amal indak....kam raatibhaa?*

11. CO: *Oh.... Sittu miab....*

Data (10) and (11) are indirective speech acts. What the speaker wants to convey is the certainty that the salary of her is in accordance with the provisions of the Indonesian government regarding the minimum salary received by the all Indonesian Migrant Worker, which is 1,200 riyals or about 4.5 million rupiah per year 2020. In speech (10) in an interrogative form, it is found that the speaker asked the salary that received by her at the first of working with her employer. Information about the first salary obtained by her can be observed in data (11) which is 600 riyals or around 2,250,000 rupiah. In the two data above,

it can be concluded that speaker also apply indirectness mitigation tools with the principle of benefit scale and optional scale.

## Conclusion

It was found that the Consular Functions Officer realized the problem solving for Indonesian Worker with several mitigation strategies such as: Indirectness, Tag question, Immediacy and Hedges accompanied by the principle of a benefit scale, an optional scale, an indirectness scale and a social distance scale. Some strategies that are not realized are Disclaimer and Parenthetical Verbs. While the principle of politeness scale that is not realized is Authority Scale. In addition, the forms of mitigation are implemented in two patterns, both are a single application pattern with one form of mitigation and a combination application pattern with two or more forms of mitigation.

Second, the process of problem solving of Indonesian Worker in Saudi Arabia is a speech event dominated by the Face Threatening Act (FTA). The use of mitigation tools by the Consular Function Officer of Indonesia Embassy in Riyadh shows the implementation of politeness strategies and becomes an absolute thing to be applied to be considered a conflict in order to prevent each speech participant from Face Threatening Act (FTA).

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