

The Function of Hedge *~to omou* in verbal interaction Yuriko Koike: Analysis in Interview from NTV News Channel

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Abstract

Hedges are an important linguistic feature in interpersonal communication to make communication run effectively. One of the hedges widely used in Japanese verbal interaction is *~to omou*. Hedges *~to omou* shows the speaker's subjectivity and the intersubjectivity that emphasizes the addressee's point of view. Intersubjectivity is related to the social function of using hedges. This article explains the social function of hedges *~to omou* used by Japanese politician Yuriko Koike in an interview on the theme 'female parliamentarians in Japan'. The analysis of the social function of hedges is carried out based on the concept proposed by Lauwereyns. Data collection was carried out using the listening and recording method, and the data were then classified and analyzed based on Lauwereyns's concept regarding the social function of a hedge. The social function of hedge *~to omou* is supported by other hedges with similar functions in utterances. The results of this study indicate that in utterances containing criticism and suggestions, Hedge *~to omou* tends to have the social function of politeness and solidarity. While in an utterance containing opinions, Hedge *~to omou* has a social function of politeness and self-protection.

Keywords: *Social Function of hedge, hedge ~to omou, Yuriko Koike*

INTRODUCTION

Hedges are used as a strategy to make the content of the proposition uncertain; the form of hedges can be particles, words, or phrases. In Traugott's work (Traugott, 2003), hedges are divided into subjective and intersubjective. Subjectivity focuses on the speaker's attitudes and beliefs, and intersubjectivity concerns the explicit expression of the speaker's attention to the "self" of the addressee. According to Lauwereyns (Lauwereyns, 2000), hedges are generally divided into 2; content-oriented and socially-oriented. There are three functions of hedges: discourse function, semantic function, and social functions. In discourse view hedges are seen as multifunctional, many things can be expressed from hedges, such as vagueness, speaker uncertainty, or interpersonal factors of conversation participants. In a semantic view, hedges are closely related to vagueness. In particular, vagueness is related to information, and speakers are vague because they feel uncertain. In social functions, there are 3 motivations: politeness, self-protection, and solidarity.

In Japanese, hedging expressions are found in the following word groups; *utterance-final expressions for example ~to omou (I think that), toka (or something), mitai na (is like), tari (and such), te iu ka (or rather), kanji (is like, feel like), kamoshirenai (may, might), janai desu (isn't it?), kana (I wonder, maybe); noun suffixes for example teki, suru hito, toka; adverbs for example toriaezu, ichioo, kekkoo, nanka* (Lauwereyns, 2000).

In this study, hedge *~to omou* is used as the research focus. Tanaka (Tanaka, 2010) argues that the *omou* verb, which is considered a hedge, is one of the characteristics of Japanese people in communication. This is because Japanese will invariably end their statements with the verb *omou*. In English, *verba omou* is usually equivalent to 'I think,' 'in my opinion,' and 'I believe,' indicating assumption, expectation, opinion, or subjective argumentation (Iori, 2002), and (Maynard, 2005). This marker expresses one's emotion, usually placed at the end of sentences

to make subjective statements more subtle (Hirose & Kakuko, 2001:180) and (Iori, 2002: 208). Takiura in Hotta & Horie (2018) cites the opinions of several Japanese linguistic experts who state the characteristics of the verb *omou*, including; weakening the speaker's commitment to the involuntary propositional discourse, softening sentences, encoding probability, subjectivity, volition, recollection, and indirectness. The hedge *~to omou* showing the speaker's perception *toward the certainty of a situation*, or shows the speaker's level of confidence in the proposition spoken (Hotta & Horie, 2018).

In general, *~to omou* indicates indirectness and linguistic politeness in the Japanese communication concept. The following are examples of *~to omou* in utterances. In utterance (1), *~to omou* implies the speaker's subjective thought. Meanwhile, utterance (2) signifies speech strategy by softening utterances to keep the conversation harmonious. The strategy in utterance (2) is carried out by accepting the interlocutor's opinion first, then countering with an argument followed by *~to omoimasu* to soften the utterance.

(1) *Kondo no jikken wa seikou suru to omou.*

(I think this experiment will succeed.)

(Iori, 2002: 207)

(2) A: *Nihon jin wa gaikokugo ga heta desu yo ne.*

(Japanese are not good at foreign languages, right?)

B: *Tashika ni sou kamo shiremasen ga, reigai mo aru to omoimasu.*

(Probably right, but I don't think everyone is like that.)

(Iori, 2002: 218)

Research on *omou* as hedges has been conducted by Mi (Mi, 2018), Hotta & Horie (2018), and Bong (Bong, 2018). Mi examined the verb *omou* in two conversational situations between female students. The first conversational situation was with female students who were already familiar, and the second conversational situation was with female students who had just met for the first time. From the research, it can be concluded that in both conversational situations,

to omou is more often used as a hedge than a think verb. Hotta & Horie (2018) examined the mental verb *omou* in a rejection sentence by native speakers and JSL learners. The results of their study showed that verb *omou* is used as a politeness strategy in rejection situations by both native speakers and JSL learners; verb *omou* as a hedge is used more often by JSL learners; the use of the hedging or intersubjective mitigation function by native speakers is a more peripheral function of *omou*, while *omou* used by JSL learners tends to use its prototypical subjective attitude marking function. Hotta and Horie emphasize that the prototypical function of *omou* is subjectivity, while the peripheral one is intersubjectivity. Subjective properties are related to propositional judgment such as 'uncertain', 'possible', and 'approximately'. Intersubjective properties are related to the addressee's sense such as mitigation of proposition. According to Hotta & Horie, it is in line with Traugott's (2003) thinking that hedges are divided into two classes: subjective and intersubjective. Bong (2018) examined the use of hedges '*omou*' in Japanese and "*sayngkakhata*" in Korean from the politeness perspective of Brown & Levinson (1978, 1987). The results of Bong's research are that in assertive sentences, directive sentences, and sentences with commissive illocutionary style, "hedge *omou*" and "*sayngkakhata*" are used as hedges for negative politeness strategies. From the previous studies, it can be concluded that Hedge *to omou* has a subjective and intersubjective nature, the use of Hedge *to omou* in conversation shows uncertainty, private information making, softening, and politeness.

Politicians often utilize hedges as markers in various verbal interactions, such as interviews, press conferences, and speeches. They usually face conditions where they should answer questions, describe problems they probably do not completely understand, or explain a sensitive issue in which they should be neutral to avoid offending many people. In such conditions, hedges in utterances are beneficial to protect their image in public. Another politician like Obama utilizes hedges to show politeness, avoid direct criticism, signify efforts for his arguments

to be accepted, and let his interlocutor get involved in the conversation. He pragmatically uses hedges to mitigate his claims and express a lack of commitment in his propositions (Habeb, 2019). Meanwhile, Demiyati identified hedge's functions used by the prime minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, in his speeches, including mitigation, self-protection from criticism, politeness, confrontation avoidance, relationship building with his interlocutor, and lack of commitment and responsibility (Demiyati, 2018).

Hedging is a linguistic and sociolinguistic device construed as 'addressee oriented' (Okamoto 2006). Related to the concept of 'addressee-oriented', according to Lauwereyns, hedges are also considered to have social functions such as politeness, self-protection, and solidarity. Although self-protection is speaker-oriented, self-protection is related to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategy of vagueness to avoid disagreement and mitigate statements. Self-protection is related to the content of the speech or the speaker's knowledge. Hedge is used to avoid or mitigate statements that the speaker is unsure of the truth. The politeness is seen from the aspect of positive politeness in using words that consider the speaker's social attributes. Solidarity is associated with politeness because it is politeness-oriented and maintains positive relationships and a comfortable psychological distance between the speaker and the addressee. In addition, solidarity is about saving face; solidarity is associated with informality, closeness, and rapport with the addressee, building rapport in communicating themselves (Lauwereyns, 2000). In line with Lauwereyns's opinion, Hotta & Horie (2018) believe that hedges have a high level of intersubjectivity. Hedge *~to omou*, in addition to having subjective characteristics, also has intersubjective characteristics in spoken discourse.

As written in the previous paragraph, several studies have been conducted on hedge *~to omou*, namely comparative research on the use of hedges *~to omou* in native speakers and Japanese language learners in refusal speech (Hotta & Horie,

2018); comparison of the use of hedges *~to omou* among female students who are already familiar and those who have just met for the first time (Mi, 2018), comparison of the use of hedges *~to omou* with Korean hedges which have almost the same function (Bon, 2018). Based on the characteristics of hedges, this study aims to describe the function of hedge *~to omou* used by Japanese female politician Yuriko Koike in an interview conducted by a TV station and also broadcast on YouTube. The interview theme was about the few women in the Japanese legislature. The theme is crucial because Japan is one of the countries with the lowest number of female parliamentarians in the world. This study will show how Yuriko Koike uses hedge *~to omou* to support her arguments or give her opinions on the theme. Yuriko Koike (hereafter referred to as Koike) was the Governor of Tokyo from 2016–2020 and 2020–2024. She now become one of the senior Japanese female politicians (Koike Yuriko Official Website, n.d.).

RESEARCH METHODS

The object of the study was the speech uttered by Japanese female politician Yuriko Koike in her interview. The interview was taken from the NTV News YouTube channel on November 18, 2021. The video title was “Josei to Seiji” Nihon no Josei Giin naze sukunai? Koike Tochiji Dokuten Intabyuu (‘Women and Politics’: Why are so Few Female Parliament Members? Exclusive Interview with Governor Koike) (NTV News, 2021). This exclusive interview aimed to discover the things related to Japanese women’s roles and positions in politics from Koike’s perspective as a governor and politician. The main topic of the interview was gender inequality in Japan, particularly in politics. Despite being a developed country with advanced technology, the gender gap still becomes crucial in Japan. The selection of data sources is based on the consideration that gender inequality is still an important issue in Japan.

Data collection and analysis are carried out with the following steps. After selecting the interview video as the data source, the next step was data transcription. The transcribed data was then validated by a native Japanese speaker who rechecked the transcription content with the interview. After the rechecking process, the transcription was translated into English. Then, it was sorted by collecting utterances with the hedge *~to omou* in a whole sentence. In the interview, 10 utterances containing the hedge *~to omou* used by Koike were found. Then the data was classified based on the nature of the speech, namely speech containing criticism, suggestions, and opinions. After that, the data were analyzed based on the function of hedges in sentences by Lauwereyns (Lauwereyns, 2000). This study was then finalized by concluding the analysis.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Of the 10 data, 3 data contain criticism, 3 data that contain suggestions, and 4 data that contain opinions. Example 1 and Example 2 fall into the category of utterances containing criticism, Example 3 includes utterances containing suggestions and Example 4 and Example 5 contain ordinary opinions.

The following is an explanation of each data example.

Example 1

*Kimeru baai ni, sore mochiron ano dansei demo hijou ni sono josei seisaku ni nesshin na kata mo oraremasu keredomo, yahari ano... josei no koe ga chokusetsu, ee mata ishikettei no ba ni chokustesu kakawaru ka inakatte iu no wa yahari chigau **to omoun desu ne.***

(During the decision-making process, of course, some men are extremely enthusiastic about women's policy, but I think it makes a difference whether or not women's voices are directly involved in the decision-making process.)

Example 2

*Desuga, maa izure ni shite mo yappari kimeru ba ni iru koto tte iu no wa nanika to juuyou da **to omoimasu shi,***

(However, in any case, I think being in the place where the decisions are made is somehow important...)

Example 1 is part of the answer to the interview question ‘why the number of female parliamentarians has not increased’. Koike's personal opinion in example 1 can be categorized as a criticism. In example 1 Koike emphasizes an important criticism that in reality, female parliamentarians do not have an important role in the decision-making process. At the beginning of the sentence, Koike expressed a positive evaluation of male parliamentarians that they were enthusiastic about policies regarding women, after that, Koike expressed her personal opinion that rejected the statement that women's voices in parliament were involved in decision-making.

Example 1 included the hedge *~to omoun*, the more ‘intimate’ variant of *~to omoimasu*, and another hedge marker interactive particle *ne* (*'yahari chigau to omoun desu ne*). Although it is said that *~to omou* indicates the subjective opinion of the speaker (Hirose & Kakuko, 2001), in Example 1 hedge *~to omou* shows more of the intersubjective nature to the addressee. The function of hedge *~to omou* is to make someone's statement in an argument or opinion softer (Hirose & Kakuko, 2001: 180). According to Iori, one of the functions of *~to omou* is to reduce assertiveness when rejecting the other person's opinion.

The indecisiveness in expressing opinions or arguments is also supported by using another hedge in the form of the interactive particle *ne* at the end of the sentence in Example 1. This article denotes positive politeness since it involves the addressee in the utterance, such as asking for approval (Ogi, 2017), (Onodera, 2004). Onodera (2004: 124-125) emphasized that the interactive particle *ne* signifies conformity and involvement in communication. The addressee's involvement indicates the speaker's cooperative attitude since they attempt to adjust themselves with their addressee in their utterances. In addition, by using this particle, the speaker assumes that their addressee will completely understand their feelings (Ogi, 2017: 89).

Example 1 was a criticism of women's voices not involved in the parliament's decision-making. From the grammatical structure, it could be said that Koike made subtle criticism with politeness by conveying the positive things first, followed by the negatives, which reduced the straightforwardness of her criticism. Furthermore, using *~to omoimasu*, and interactive particle *ne* also softened the critiques, and more polite. The polite impression is also supported by hedge *ne* as an interaction particle by creating a sense of involvement and cooperation with the addressee. Example 2 is similar to Example 1, a sentence containing criticism. The criticism in example 2 is conveyed indirectly and generally, not directed at any particular party. Behind the statement in Example 2, lies criticism that women's voices have not been involved in decision-making. The hedging markers in Example 2 (*~to omoimasu*) had a similar function to the ones in Example 1, it made the critique sentence softer, more polite, and weakened criticism.

Based on Lauwereyns's opinion regarding the social function of hedges, the hedge *~to omou* in the critique sentence in Example 1 has a social function of politeness and solidarity. A sense of involvement and cooperation also supports it by using the interaction particle *ne*. Hedges in Example 2, hedge *~to omou* has a social function of politeness because it makes the sentence softer, reduces assertiveness, and weakens criticism.

Example 3

Sou iu koto mo desu ne, iko-ru ni mite ageru hitsuyou ga arun janai ka to omoimasu ne.

Kono onaji nouryoku wo motte iru hito de aru naraba, ano..josei wo yori ooku, ano.. seiji-men de mo keizai-men de mo, han'ei shite iku koto ga ima no nihon no desu ne, samazama na kadai wo kaizen saseru hijou ni ii houhou dewa nai ka to omoimasu ne.

(I think that these things need to be looked at equally, and if they are people with the same abilities, then I think that having more women involved in both political and economic spheres would be a very good way to improve the various issues facing Japan today.)

Example 3 was a response to the question, 'What obstacles are Japanese women facing?'. Koike's reaction suggested that Japan's government and society should look at men's and women's capabilities equally and empower more women by engaging them economically and politically. Besides Hedge *~to omou*, in the utterance, there are also hedges *~janai ka*, and interactive particle *ne*, '*iko-ru ni mite ageru hitsuyou ga arun janai ka to omoimasu ne*' (I think that these things need to be looked at equally.). The interactive particle *ne* denoted the addressee's involvement, showing politeness in her statement. The hedge *~dewa nai ka* is the formal form of *~janaika*, similar to 'isn't...?' or 'shouldn't...?', (Maynard, 2005). According to Asano (Asano, 2007), *~janai ka* can be interpreted as 'don't you think' in English. Hedges *~janai ka* was used to require confirmation from the addressee and the speaker does not know whether the addressee will agree with what he said. Koike suggests that Japanese society should look at women's and men's capabilities equally

The hedge *~to omou* functions to make the sentence vague and softer. Using hedge *~janai ka* and the interactive particle *ne*, Koike involved the addressee by asking for confirmation regarding the content of his speech. Using the hedge *~to omou*, *~janai ka*, and the interactive particle *ne*, Koike's suggestion becomes softer, avoiding asserting, lightening claims, and containing politeness values such as involving the addressee and being solidarity. In Example 3 hedge *~to omou* shows the social function, namely politeness and solidarity, which arises from using hedge *~janai ka* and hedge particle *ne*.

Example 4

Maa, nihon no tsuyosa tte iu no wa mushiro minna de kou hitotsu ni natte, ee...sorede susunde kita to tsukisusunda to iu no wa saisho no koudo seichouki nado ni wa yuukou datte to iu fuu ni omoimasu.

(Well, I think Japan's strength lies in the fact that everyone came together as one and forged ahead, which was effective during the initial period of high economic growth.)

Example 5

Ee, soko wo kaenai tte iu mono hitotsu no porishii kamo shiremasen kedomo, ee torinokosarete shimattemo, ano.. ikenai naa to iu fuu ni omoimasu shi... Mou ichido aratamete nihon jitai wo kyakkanshi shite, de, soko ni tarinai mono wa nani ka, sono naka no hitotsu ga "josei no chikara wo ikashikirete nai" to iu koto da to omoimasu. (Well, not changing that may be one policy, yet I don't think it's a good idea if we are lagged. and if we look at Japan objectively again, and ask ourselves what is lacking there, I think one of our weaknesses is that we have not fully utilized the power of women.)

The utterances in Examples 4 and 5 were responses to the question, 'Why does women empowerment in Japan so lag?'. Koike did not answer it straightforwardly, she instead conveyed a statement with a sense that Japan would be strong if all people unified their ideas and thoughts, and she desired gender equality in all aspects of society. Examples 4 and 5 included the hedging marker *~to omou* in the form *~to iu fuu ni omoimasu*. The expression *~to iu fuu* is employed for explaining a situation, method, or way of doing something by providing an example (Sunagawa, 2005: 510). Koike's argument in Example 4 was quoted from someone's statement, indicated by expression *datte*. The hedges *~to omou* were utilized to emphasize that her statement was subjective and functions to make utterance softer and avoid commitment indicated by the quote expression *datte*. Meanwhile, Example 5 included the hedging markers *kamoshiremasen*. By utilizing hedge *kamoshiremasen* (possibility), a speaker can prevent a highly assertive or judgemental statement (Maynard, 1993: 371) and avoid a firm opinion and disagreement against others' opinions (Maynard, 1993: 212). At the beginning of Example 5, Koike delivered an opinion on a situation related to the government by using *kamoshiremasen* (maybe), 'Well, not changing that *may be* one policy, but ...'. In the next sentence, she said, 'I don't think it's a good idea if we (Japan) are lagged.' The hedging marker *kamoshiremasen* in the utterance served to reduce assertiveness and imply hesitation in her opinion.

Examples 4 and 5 are Koike's statements containing opinions about the general state of Japan. In sentences containing personal opinions or views that do not involve the interests of the interlocutor, the hedge *~to omou* indicating that the proposition is subjective, the assessment of the proposition as something uncertain. Hedge *kamoshiremasen*, makes the utterance less convincing, and prevents a highly assertive or judgemental statement. In Examples 4 and 5 which are general opinion statements, the use of hedge *~to omou* contains the proposition as something uncertain and makes the sentence softer. So Example 4 and 5 can be categorized as having the social function of politeness. The use of hedge *kamoshiremasen* which accompanies hedge *~to omou* in example 5 can also be classified as self-protection because *kamoshiremasen* contains the meaning of preventing a judgment and opinion from becoming firm. After all, Koike is not sure about the certainty of the opinion.

In stating a statement or opinion, Japanese people usually end their sentences with the verb *omou*. The verb *omou*, considered a hedge, is a characteristic of Japanese communication because it softens the statement (Tanaka, 2010:201). The subjective nature of hedge *~to omou* is inherent in all data found, but the intersubjective nature is more prominent in utterances containing criticism and suggestions. Hedge *~to omou* is to convey subjective opinions and can also express the speaker's intersubjectivity towards the addressee. This intersubjectivity aligns with the social function of hedge based on Lauwereyns's opinion, namely politeness, self-protection, and solidarity.

In utterances containing criticism (Example 1 and Example 2), hedge *~to omou* has a social function, namely **politeness and solidarity** with the function of softening criticism, preventing assertion, lightening claims, and preventing confrontation that may arise due to criticism. The social function of **solidarity** arises from using other hedges namely the interactive particle *ne*, which involves the addressee in his speech. In utterances containing suggestions (Example 3), the

hedge *~to omou* has a social function of **politeness and solidarity** by avoiding assertion, softening, and lightening claims. The social function of politeness and solidarity is also caused by using the interactive particle *ne* which indicates involvement and the hedge *~janai ka* which indicates a request for confirmation to the addressee. In utterances containing opinions (Example 4 and Example 5), the hedge *~to omou* emphasizes its subjective side, the social function of the hedge *~to omou* that appears is **politeness** because *~to omou* makes it softer and avoids emphasizing uncertainty. The *kamoshiremasen*, hedge in Example 5, has the function of reducing the certainty of an opinion or assessment. This is related to the certainty of the proposition. The hedge *kamoshiremasen* shows that Koike is not sure about the opinion she conveyed. *Kamoshiremasen* helps emphasize the nature of *~to omou* which shows vagueness and uncertainty. Therefore, Example 5 contains a social function of **self-protector**.

Politeness is a social function of hedge *~to omou* which is always present in types of utterances criticism, suggestions, and opinions. Hedge *~to omou* indicates indirectness in utterances. This indirectness is one of the characteristics of Japanese communication. According to Davis and Ikeno, hedges indicate an indirect attitude toward communication. For the Japanese, indirectness is a distinctive characteristic of communication, which shows linguistic politeness. They usually express their feelings or opinions indirectly. Otherwise, expressing opinions clearly and assertively will be considered impolite for the assumption that the addressee does not understand what the speaker says, so the speaker should assert it (Davies & Ikeno, 2002).

The use of Hedge *~to omou* considers the other person into consideration and therefore be categorized as positive politeness. According to Vlasyan (2019) hedges such as 'I think, I suppose, I believe' are speaker-oriented and emphasize subjective attitudes. These hedges are considered more polite because they are not understood as absolutes. Their main function is to avoid absolutes and

disagreements from the addressee. These hedges also minimize face-threatening actions and sound more polite (Vlasyan, 2019). Hedges *~to omou* are often used at the end of a sentence to express emotions, desires, opinions, or arguments so that someone's statement feels softer (Hirose & Kakuko, 2001) and shows the involvement of the speech partner (involvement).

Similar to **politeness**, the social function of **solidarity** is also found in utterances containing suggestions. According to Brown and Levinson (1997), solidarity is a strategy that emphasizes similarities between speakers and addressee. This similarity can be the basis for building good and close relationships between interlocutors. According to Maynard, Japanese people who use “I think” are probably trying to be cooperative, accommodating, and friendly by translating the strategies they know (Maynard, 1997). Solidarity is also closely related to politeness because it involves maintaining a good and close relationship between the speaker and the addressee. Hedge *~to omou* also contains the characteristic of solidarity because *~to omou* shows an effort to be cooperative, accommodating, and friendly in verbal interactions. This attitude is influenced by the character of Japanese people who tend to be more intuitive, not argumentative, and prefer not to argue (Maynard, 1997). Apart from *~to omou*, hedge *ne* which is an interaction particle, it also has a social solidarity function because according to Onodera (Onodera, 2004: 124-125) the interactive particle *ne* contains an attitude of respecting others and making others feel important. The use of the interactive particle *ne* reflects interaction strategies such as cooperation, solidarity, and involvement.

The social function of **self-protection** hedge appears in opinion speech. Opinions that only respond to general problems that occur in Japan without involving other parties in Koike's speech. According to Lauwereyns, self-protection is related to the truth and belief in the contents of a proposition. Lauwereyns also added that although self-protection is speaker-oriented, it is also related to Brown

and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategy of vagueness to avoid disagreement and mitigate statements.

CONCLUSION

Hedge *~to omou* has subjective and intersubjective characteristics, which are seen in the content of the proposition which involves the addressee and other parties. Hedge *~to omou* shows a tendency towards different social functions based on the type of utterance. In an utterance oriented towards the addressee, such as criticism and suggestions, hedge *~to omou* has the social function of politeness and solidarity. This function is also supported by another accompanying hedge such as the interactive particle *ne* and the expression *~janai ka*. In speaker-oriented speech such as opinion sentences, the use of the hedge *~to omou* and other accompanying hedges (hedge *~kamoshiremasen*) shows the social function of hedge politeness and self-protection. This means that the social function of politeness appears in all types of speech; solidarity appears in an utterance containing criticism and suggestions; self-protection appears in an utterance containing neutral opinions. This means that in an addressee-oriented utterance, Koike does it with a hedge that contains politeness and solidarity in criticizing and giving suggestions. While an utterance contains a general opinion, Koike does it politely and with mitigation or self-protection.

For Japanese people in general, involving the addressee in the speech is essential. This attitude is reflected e.g. asking for approval and confirmation; the speaker focuses more on the addressee's feelings and attitudes than the content of the speech itself; avoiding confrontation or building a good relationship with the addressee. These attitudes show positive politeness that focuses on the 'comfort' of others.

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