

THE USE OF *KARE/KANOJO* IN JAPANESE SOCIETY TODAY

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This paper aims to discuss the use of *kare/kanojo* 彼/彼女 (he/she) in Japanese society today, in order to elucidate the socio-psychological significance of these terms. Based on questionnaires and interviews recently surveyed in Japan, the paper will question what categories of people (e.g. family members, friends, celebrities, and other different social backgrounds) are more likely to be referred to as *kare/kanojo*, and whether or not other social factors such as the relationship between speaker and listener affect the use of *kare/kanojo*.

Kare/kanojo have been much discussed in theoretical linguistics (Okamura 1972; Kinsui 1987, 1989; Hasegawa 1995, 1995; Kashiwadani 1984; Takubo & Kimura 1992). However, these works are more concerned with categorising the terms in the parts-of-speech system, and/or with pragmatic constraints on their occurrence. They do not pertain to the sociological categorisation of referents referred to as *kare/kanojo*. To the best of my knowledge, Hinds (1975) is the only one to have undertaken this type of study.

The twenty-five years since Hinds' research was done may have seen changes in the use of *kare/kanojo*; we empirically know that these terms are used more frequently than before in our daily life. This paper will examine a wider range of age groups (15 to 75 years old) than Hinds (teenagers to 29 years old), to see generation differences as well as historical changes in the use of *kare/kanojo*. Also, this paper will discuss whether or not the relationship between speaker and listener, and the referent's social environments affect the use of *kare/kanojo*, and what psychological effects occur when using these

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terms. These aspects were not examined in Hinds (1975). Results from the questionnaire suggest a certain new trend prevailing in today's Japan. In order to verify this, interviews with twenty-five people were conducted, which confirmed the assumption made at the time of questionnaire, and has led to further elaborations of the use of *kare/kanojo*.

Background

The grammatical status of kare/kanojo in traditional grammar

In the traditional Japanese grammar (*kokugogaku* = lit. national language study), *kare/kanojo* were hardly raised as a scholarly target in the categorisation of parts-of-speech. This was partly because these terms were not prevalent in spoken Japanese in the early 20th century, and when they were used, for instance, in written Japanese, they gave an image of translation or 'Westernisation', as they had been created as the result of the translation of Western literature in the mid-19th century.

Because the notion of parts-of-speech was imported from the West, traditional grammarians were more concerned with how this notion could apply to the Japanese language. One of the prevalent issues was whether pronouns in general should be admitted as an independent category in the analysis of parts-of-speech. For example, Sakuma (1936), Tokieda (1955), Hashimoto (1945) and Yamada (1936), in spite of some differences in their arguments, admit the status of 'pronouns', which can be further categorised as 'personal pronouns' and 'demonstratives'. However, they did not refer to *kare/kanojo* in either of the categories. Later on, pronouns were established as an independent category. Only then, did *kare* appear in the list of personal pronouns. Kieda (1937), Sakakura (1974), Mikami (1972) and Yamazaki (1958) refer to *kare* as *enshoo* (lit. distance-reference) in the same category of *a*-forms such as *ano hito* (that person), *are* (that person; familiarity) and *aitsu* (that person; male, colloquial).

It would seem rather strange that *kanojo* is not listed. However, the way these researchers looked at *kare* is not based on the modern use of *kare/kanojo*, but goes back to the usage in the old Japanese system. The term, *kare*, existed in old literature, applying to both men and women, although it did not directly point out a 'person' but 'location' (as a sign of politeness to the referent person). *Ka* or *kare* was used in referring to someone in distance.

According to Ono (1988), the *ko*-category (e.g. *kore*, *kono*) implies someone proximal to the speaker physically as well as psychologically (*uchi*-consciousness in Ono's term: 'group consciousness'). On the other hand, the opposite lies in the *ka*-category (e.g. *kanata*, *kare*, *kashiko*), which refers to those distal from the speaker physically as well as psychologically. Therefore, in old literature, men and women of a high status in the Court are referred to as *kare*, as they receive absolute honorifics, thus are socially distant from the speaker/writer. This term was adopted in the 19th century as the translation of

the English 'he'. The English 'she' was originally translated as *ka-no-onnna* (彼の女), meaning 'woman in distance', and later on this became *kanojo* (彼女).

In recent studies, *kare/kanojo* are discussed from a different perspective, and examined through their actual use in daily life. Hasegawa (1995), Kashiwadani (1984), Kinsui (1987, 1989), Okamura (1972) and Takubo and Kimura (1992) consider *kare/kanojo* to be demonstratives rather than pronouns because they are not anaphoric but deictic; they do not occur as a mere pro-form, but are used as indexing someone from the speaker's viewpoint. This is also because they occur only when both speaker and listener know the referent in the same way as the *a*-type demonstrative (e.g. *ano*, *are* = that). These linguists are no longer concerned with the dichotomy of proximity and distance, but rather, pay attention to how *kare/kanojo* occur and behave in a given context to find their pragmatic constraints.

For example, Kinsui (1989) says that an anonymous person cannot be referred to as *kare/kanojo*, as shown in (1) and (2).

(1) Misu yunibaasu ga shikaisha to akushushi-ta.
miss universe Nom compere with shake hands-Past
(Miss Universe shook hands with the compere.)

(2) Misu yunibaasu wa ichi-nen goto ni kootai-suru.
miss universe Top one-year every at change-do
(Miss Universe is relieved every year.)

Kinsui (1989: 107) says that 'Miss Universe' in (1) can be expressed as *kanojo* in a subsequent context, but that in (2) cannot, because the former refers to a particular person, but the latter an anonymous person.

Also, Okamura (1972: 109) claims that *kare/kanojo* never occur when the referent is not known to speaker or listener. The speaker can say (3), but not (4).

(3) Ano hito wa donata desu ka?
that person Top who Cop Q
(Who is that person?)

(4) * Kare wa donata desu ka?
He Top who Cop Q
(Who is he?)

However, the above argument is problematic for some reasons. Firstly, it is an oversimplification to equate *kare/kanojo* with the *a*-type just because the knowledge of the referent is recognised by both speaker and listener. This is because *kare/kanojo* and the *a*-type correspond to different types of 'knowledge' of a referent. The knowledge may be personal information of the referent such as his/her name. Or, it can be obtained by recognising the referent's presence (i.e. a mere observation). The *a*-type demonstrative can encompass both types of knowledge. On the other hand, *kare/kanojo*

presuppose the referent's personal information only, and thus the knowledge by simple observation does not allow them to occur in utterance. Therefore, (3) is acceptable because *ano hito* (that person), though his/her name is not known to either of the interactants, was observed by both of them, and has become a common reference. On the other hand, in (4) *kare* cannot occur because the referent person is not *known* to either of the interactants, i.e. there is no prior personal knowledge about the referent person.

Secondly, referents for *kare/kanojo* do not have to be known to both speaker and listener. For an example, in (5) the referent is known only to Person A, and yet *kare* can safely occur.

(5) A1: Yamada-san ni kooen o shi-te-mora-oo.
 Mr Yamada to lecture Acc do-TE-receive-let's
 B1: Yamada-san-tte, dare yo.
 quote who MD

A2: Aa, *kare/kono hito* wa ne, kyonen kono daigaku ni ki-ta
 oh he/this person Top MD last year this university to come-Past
hito da
 person MD

B2: Fuun, sono hito/**kare*, kooen joozuna-no?
 really that person/*he lecture good at-Q

(A1: Let's ask Mr Yamada to give a public lecture.

B1: Who is Yamada?

A2: Oh, he/this person came to this university last year.

B2: Really? Is that person/*he good at lectures?)

The referent, Yamada, is known to Person A, therefore, can be referred to as *kare* (as in A2). Because Person B does not know Yamada, she cannot refer to him as *kare* in this dialogue (as shown in B2).

The demonstrative, the *ko*-type, indicates that the referent is proximal to the speaker physically or psychologically. Because *kare* in (5) can be replaced as *kono hito* (this person) in Person A's utterance, *kare* is not a mere replacement of the referent's name, but implies that the knowledge of the referent belongs to Person A. Or, the knowledge of the referent is treated as Person A's territory (Kamio's (1990) term). On the other hand, Person B cannot refer to Yamada as *kare*, thus must use *sono hito* (that person). The *so*-type (*sore, sono*) belongs to the listener's territory of information. Therefore, *kare/kanojo* look as though they function as equivalent to the *ko*-type.

However, a closer look at the behaviour of *kare/kanojo* will reveal that it cannot entirely match that of the *ko*-type. The latter can occur whether or not the referent person is present at the time of interaction, that is, it occurs as long as the referent person is either psychologically or physically *close* to the speaker. On the other hand, *kare/kanojo* occur only when the referent person's information belongs to the speaker and at the same time he/she is *not*

present when the speaker is referring to him/her. Therefore, in (6), for example, *kare* cannot be used.

(6) Shookaishi-masu. Kono hito wa dooryoo no Tanaka-kun desu.
introduce-Polite this person Top colleague of Cop

*Kare to wa juu-nen no tsukiai desu.
He with Top ten-year of association Cop

((I) will introduce (this person to you). This person is my colleague, Mr Tanaka. I have known him for ten years.)

In (6), Tanaka is present at the time of interaction, and thus cannot be referred to as *kare*. Whereas, *kono hito* (this person) is possible in this context. *Kare/kanojo* occur when the referent is raised as a topic in conversation (i.e. as a third person). This means that these terms still maintain their traditional sense from old Japanese, implying a physical distance from the speaker.

Furthermore, *kare/kanojo* behave like common nouns in other environments. For example,

(7) *subarashii kanojo* (wonderful she = wonderful lady)

In (7), *kanojo* is used as a common noun, equivalent to *onnna no hito* (a female person).

It should also be noted that those pragmatic constraints mentioned above are valid only in spoken interaction. They do not apply in written Japanese, especially in novels. This is because the writer has total control over his/her characters in novels, and once *kare/kanojo* are used, they are anaphorically used. There may be some restrictions on types of novel (e.g. Japanese historical novels rarely use *kare/kanojo*), but basically it is entirely up to the writer whether characters are referred to as *kare/kanojo*. In this case, they function as personal pronouns rather than demonstratives. (Perhaps this is the reason why Kashiwadani (1984) categorises *kare/kanojo* as personal pronouns, considering them to be anaphoric.)

We have seen constraints on the occurrence of *kare/kanojo*. It seems that their grammatical status is not clearly determined. They neither fall into one of the parts-of-speech, nor are recognised as deictic or anaphoric. They cannot be considered to be equivalent to any of the demonstratives, either.

Moreover, when social relationships between speaker, referent person and listener are to be considered, *kare/kanojo* will occur in a more complex manner. For example,

(8) Tanaka shachoo ga yonde-irasshai-masu yo.
president Nom call-Prog(Hon)-Polite MD

*Kare wa ofisu de o-machi-desu.
he Top office in Hon-waite-Polite

(President Tanaka is calling (you) (=wishes to talk with you).
He is waiting in (his) office.)

In (8), *kare* is not appropriate because President Tanaka in this context is treated as a receiver of honorifics, showing a status difference between speaker and referent person. Instead of *kare*, either a zero pronoun or the title, *shachoo* (President), should be used in this context.

We know empirically that in certain social situations, particular categories of referent persons and certain social relationships between interactants prevent *kare/kanojo* from occurring. However, research on how Japanese people socially perceive the use of *kare/kanojo* has been scarce. Perhaps, Hinds (1975) was the first person that investigated the reality of their social constraints.

Hinds' (1975) investigation – social constraints on the use of kare/kanojo

Hinds (133) says that the use of *kare/kanojo* ‘often imbues the utterance, or the writing, with the feeling of a direct translation from English or another Western language.’ He assumes that possible conditioning factors on the distribution of *kare/kanojo* are the age, sex and social position of the speaker, the hearer and the referent of the pronoun, especially as these various factors manifest aspects of speaker-hearer interaction (132-133 – although he did not investigate the latter two features).

Originally, the use of *kare/kanojo* in conversation is often associated with the ‘lover effect’ (Hinds’ term); the terms *kare* and *kanojo* meant ‘boyfriend’ and ‘girlfriend’ respectively. However, as these terms were used more prevalently, Hinds investigated what types of people are referred to as *kare/kanojo*, and questioned how people feel when they overhear someone using *kare/kanojo*.

Hinds first established the following hypotheses, and proved them to be acceptable through surveys of teenagers and young adults up to 29 years of age:

- Hypothesis 1: Young adults use *kare* (meaning both *kare/kanojo*) more than high school students.
- Hypothesis 2: Females use *kare* more than males.
- Hypothesis 3: *Kare* is not used to refer to family members.
- Hypothesis 4: *Kare* is not used to refer to social superiors.
- Hypothesis 5: *Kare* is not used to refer to people in the public sphere.
- Hypothesis 6: *Kare* is used more often in direct translations from Western languages than in spontaneous conversation.
- Hypothesis 7: The extensive use of *kare* is considered improper.

Among these hypotheses, Hypothesis 6 will be ignored because it is self-evident and also irrelevant to the present study as we are more concerned with *what types of people* are chosen for the use of *kare/kanojo* rather than what texts are chosen.

Hinds (153) assumed that Hypothesis 1 occurs as a result of continued Japanese contact with Western languages. The more experience the speaker has, usually by virtue of receiving more education, the more he will use *kare* (meaning *kare/kanojo*) (154). Hypothesis 2 was confirmed as a general phenomenon, although Hinds (147) further explains that more 19-29 years old males use *kare/kanojo* to refer to friends than to close friends, while more 19-29 years old females use *kare/kanojo* to refer to close friends than to friends. More significantly, a large number of subjects use *kare/kanojo* to refer to close friends of the opposite sex. This implies that although the 'love effects' in the use of *kare/kanojo* have been slowly eliminated, they still have some residual connotations.

In the discussion of Hypothesis 3, Hinds says that one's immediate or nuclear family members are hardly referred to as *kare/kanojo*. Other members such as cousins, spouses and spouse's relatives are more likely referred to as *kare/kanojo*. Hypotheses 4 and 5 are 'born out' (154). Concerning Hypothesis 7, Hinds (155) says that 'there are a number of presuppositions, constraints, or prohibitions that prevent the free occurrence of *kare* (meaning *kare/kanojo*),' and most subjects felt strongly that there are certain emotional connotations present whenever *kare* is used.

The present research

Methodology

Twenty-five years have passed since Hinds' survey, and it is quite evident that *kare/kanojo* are more frequently heard in various social situations in today's Japan. The present study attempted to examine how the use of *kare/kanojo* has changed over the last quarter of a century. While using a similar questionnaire form to Hinds', this study extended its scope further to obtain more detailed results.

Firstly, 298 people were chosen randomly from different areas of Japan, in order to avoid biased results specific to certain regions, and age groups vary from 15 to 75 years old.² Secondly, the relationships between speaker and listener, and between speaker and referent (referred to as *kare/kanojo*) were investigated to see whether such relationships would signify the use of *kare/kanojo*. This is due to the assumption that the same referent would be differently handled in different social environments (e.g. (5) and (8) above). When subjects answered 'yes' to the question of 'referring to a certain referent as *kare* or *kanojo*,' they were further asked to choose what social relationship between speaker and listener, and/or between speaker and referent

² When the survey was conducted, it was noticed that in Kansai areas (Osaka, Kobe and Kyoto) subjects were more reluctant to use *kare/kanojo* than Kanto (mainly Tokyo). In other areas such as Nagano, people were more significantly reluctant to use them than these urban areas.

person allows them to use the terms. Thirdly, Hinds' 'psychological effects' on the use of *kare/kanojo* were more elaborately investigated. Lastly, blank columns were provided in each question to ask subjects to freely write any impressions or opinions on their answer. The collected data were classified and statistically tabulated as shown below (**Tables 1-5**).

Also, a new finding from the questionnaire was further examined for justification by conducting interviews with twenty-five people, who were selected randomly (age groups from 24 to 79 years old, 14 females and 11 males). The interview lasted 20-25 minutes, by briefly asking about their family members, friends, their favourite novelist and historical person, and comments on President Clinton and Lady Diana. At the end of the interview, those who used *kare/kanojo* during the interview were asked whether or not they used them consciously, and how they felt about the use. All the interviews were transcribed, and the use of *kare/kanojo* was extracted to examine their contextual nature (which will be shown in **Table 6**).

Findings

Table 1

Types of referent referred to as *kare/kanojo* (percentages)

	15 -30 yo	31-45 yo	45-55 yo	56 - yo
Parents	8.7	14	0	5.6
Brothers & Sisters	32.4	22	0	5.6
Teachers	8.7	2	0	0
Relatives	25	34.7	5.6	5.6
Friends*	70.5	78	29	22
Almost Strangers	55	57	28.6	27.8

* 'Friends' in Japanese (= *tomodachi*) mean the same age group as the speaker.

The most striking phenomenon in **Table 1** is that different age groups use *kare/kanojo* with different frequencies. There is a big gap between subjects under 45 years old and those over 45. Younger generations use *kare/kanojo* more liberally than older ones. Although both groups rarely use the terms to refer to teachers, it is a new trend that younger generations use these terms for their family members and relatives. Subjects over 45 also use the terms for strangers and their friends (*tomodachi* = the same age group as the speaker), while those under 45 use them much more liberally.

Twenty-five years ago, Hinds found that family members were not referred to as *kare/kanojo*. This is quite evident in **Table 1**, too, because the generation Hinds targeted in 1975 is now over 45 years old, and they still do not use *kare/kanojo* to refer to their family members. Younger generations of today do not hesitate to use these terms to refer to their family members.

The fact that friends and strangers are most freely referred to as *kare/kanojo* shows that these terms most likely occur when the speaker does not have to consider social relationships such as status differences. This is related to the fact that all generations do not use *kare/kanojo* to refer to teachers.

Table 2 shows gender differences. While Hinds found that females used *kare/kanojo* more frequently than males, the present study shows little difference between in all the categories of referents. However, the details of referent types seem to partly conform to Hind's finding. That is, females may use the terms more frequently when referring to their family members, teachers and relatives, but more males use them to refer to their friends and strangers. On the other hand, Hinds said that females chose 'closer' friends than males to use *kare/kanojo* for. Males seem to be more comfortable in choosing people in a socially neutral position than females.

Table 2

Gender Difference (percentages are shown)

	Men	Women
Parents	7.5	8.3
Brothers & Sisters	15	33
Teachers	1.3	4.2
Friends	86	83
Relatives	12.5	21
Almost Strangers	47.5	41.7

Table 3 shows how the social relationship between speaker and listener will affect the use of *kare/kanojo*. In the Table, A-E indicate types of listener in relation to speaker, and the items from 'parents' to 'strangers' are types of referent referred to as *kare/kanojo*.

Table 3What kind of listener do you choose when referring to the referent as *kare/kanojo*? (actual numbers of responses are shown below)

	Parents	Siblings	Friends	Strangers
A The listener is senior or higher in status	3	13	43	29
B The listener is junior or lower in status	4	8	23	21
C The listener is your colleague or friend	17	39	86	47
D The listener is not so close	7	13	53	39
E The listener is close	10	18	41	23

In general, the social relationship between speaker and listener does not affect the use of *kare/kanojo* when talking about the speaker's friends and strangers. Social and psychological distances between speaker and listener do not count in dealing with these types of referent. On the other hand, the speaker becomes socially sensitive when referring to his/her family members. For example, *kare/kanojo* are much less frequently used for family members when the listener is close to the speaker, and similarly when the former is not close to the latter. In other words, when referring to the speaker's family members, the listener has to be psychologically quite neutral to the speaker (i.e. not too close but not too distant). This is closely related to the fact that *kare/kanojo* are much less frequently used when the listener is higher or lower in status than the speaker. This is the very reason why *kare/kanojo* are most frequently used when the listener is the speaker's colleague or friend because no social relationship affects the interactants. In other words, in order to use *kare/kanojo* for family members, speaker and listener must stand in a neutral position to each other, either socially or psychologically.

Though less significant than the above points, it is interesting to see that if the listener is junior or lower in status than the speaker, i.e. if the two interactants have certain social distances, *kare/kanojo* occur less frequently whatever types of referent are referred to, while the other social factors (A, C-E) more significantly vary according to types of referent referred to as *kare/kanojo*. This may be related somewhat to the speaker's psychological state when using *kare/kanojo*, which is shown in **Table 4**.

Table 4

Historical people and celebrities (actual numbers of responses are shown below)

(A) Japanese historical characters	48
(B) World history characters	49
(C) Japanese Royal family	8
(D) Princess Diana	27
(E) Queen Elizabeth	26
(F) Prince Charles	53
(G) Japanese Prime Ministers	20
(H) US President, Clinton	26
(I) Film stars and singers	53
(J) Sports players	55
(K) Writers	56
(L) Artists	52

Table 4 shows that most responses are from the younger generation (under 45 years old). As shown in **Table 1**, the older generation use *kare/kanojo* in a much more limited manner, and naturally the survey elicited

few responses from them regarding the question of ‘psychological effect’. Most of them left this question blank. Traditionally, *kare/kanojo* have had a special meaning, indicating the speaker’s boyfriend/girlfriend. Hinds (155) also found ‘certain emotional connotations present whenever *kare* (meaning *kare/kanojo*) is used’. Therefore, in **Table 4**, item No. 1 attracted a number of responses. However, this seems to be limited to the younger generations. There was only one response to this item from the generations over 45 years old.

It should be noted that this way of using *kare/kanojo* is not as a replacement of a referent’s name, but to mean ‘boyfriend/girlfriend’. While other referent persons should first be introduced by using their proper names, and then referred to as *kare/kanojo* in subsequent utterances, which conforms to their grammatical constraint discussed in Section 2, the case of item No. 1 allows *kare/kanojo* to be used without first referring to their proper names. This is because *kare/kanojo* are not pro-forms here, but another referent, meaning ‘my boyfriend/girlfriend’. Thus, it is possible to say, for instance, *watashi no kare* (my boyfriend), to mean a special person for the speaker. In this case, *kare/kanojo* are no longer deictic or anaphoric, but merely referential (maybe categorised as a common noun).

As a general rule, *kare/kanojo* in today’s Japan do not trigger particular psychological effects, as indicated by item No. 7. However, some subjects do experience some psychological effects when using *kare/kanojo*. It depends upon individuals whether or not they psychologically feel close to the referent when referring to him/her as *kare/kanojo*, which is shown in items Nos. 5 and 6. At other times, speakers may feel that *kare/kanojo* sound trendy (item No. 2), or informal (No. 3). No. 4 implies that the speaker monopolises the referent as his/her *uchi* member (= in-group member), which may conform to one of the grammatical constraints discussed in Section 2, i.e. the speaker should have personal information of the referent person in order to use *kare/kanojo* to refer to the referent person. Compared with the time when Hinds undertook his study, many more people use *kare/kanojo* without conveying any emotional connotations, and in spite of their pragmatic constraints, these terms may be anaphorically used in interaction.

In **Table 1**, ‘strangers’ (*tanin* = those who the speaker does not know personally) are quite frequently referred to as *kare/kanojo*, and this is quite prevalent across different generations. How about historical people and celebrities who are *tanin*, but familiar to people as general knowledge?

Table 5 shows that except in the case of royal families, both Japanese and non-Japanese people are referred to as *kare/kanojo* with almost equal frequency. The Japanese Imperial family members are rarely referred to as *kare/kanojo*, while the British royals are more frequently referred to as such. From these data alone, we cannot demonstrate why Prince Charles is referred to as *kare* more often than Princes Diana and Queen Elizabeth as *kanojo*.

Another interesting finding is that *kare/kanojo* are quite liberally used when talking about Japanese historical people in interaction. As mentioned earlier, Japanese historical novels seldom use *kare/kanojo* perhaps because

these terms connote Western culture³. On the other hand, they are more frequently used in spoken language.

Table 5

Psychological effects on the speaker using *kare/kanojo* (actual numbers of responses are shown below)

	under 45 yrs old	over 45 years old	total
(1) The referent is a special person (e.g. boy/girlfriend)	52	1	53
(2) <i>Kare/kanojo</i> sound trendy	19	0	19
(3) Informal	18	1	19
(4) Showing you know the referent very well to the listener	24	4	28
(5) The listener is not so close to you	54	6	60
(6) The listener is close to you	46	1	47
(7) No psychological trigger	108	5	113

A noteworthy point made by ten subjects from the younger generations (under 45 years old) is that *kare/kanojo* are used when the speaker *objectively* observes the referent person. These subjects chose not only some psychological effects (e.g. they feel close to or distant from the referent), but also ‘no psychological trigger’. This may imply that depending on how they are talking about particular referents, they may or may not use *kare/kanojo* to refer to the same referent. For example, the same person may choose to refer to his/her family members as *kare/kanojo* when describing or judging their behaviours, while he/she may not use them when talking about situations strongly indicating their close relationship.

Looking back at the example (5), grammatically, *kono hito* (this person) and *kare* (he) in Person A’s utterance (A2) are exchangeable. Pragmatically, however, they present the speaker’s different views, i.e. their connotations differ. *Kono hito* indicates the speaker’s monopolising the knowledge of the referent, or in Kamio’s (1990) term, the speaker’s territory of information. On the other hand, *kare* here implies the speaker’s objective observation. The choice between the two terms is up to the speaker in this particular context. However, if Person A is interacting with someone senior or junior, it is most unlikely that *kare* will be selected because Person A is obliged to specify how he socially stands in relation to the referent person rather than remaining objective about this person.

³ Out of 48 novels written by 18 writers examined, only two novels use *kare/kanojo* to refer to their characters (all novels are about famous historical people in Japan).

In order to see whether the above assumption is justifiable, interviews with twenty-five people were conducted, and real situations where *kare/kanojo* were used have been examined. Being aware of a grammatical constraint on the occurrence of *kare/kanojo* (i.e. proper names follow *kare/kanojo*), the interviewer first asked the referent's name, and continuously used his/her name or a zero pronoun during the interview.

Table 6 shows the number of interviewees who used *kare/kanojo*, and that of each type of referent referred to as *kare/kanojo*.

Table 6

The number of interviewees who used *kare/kanojo* to refer to given referents during the interview

	Family members	Friends/workmates	Novelists	Historical people	Celebrities
No of people	1	13	0	0	5

The number shown above indicates the number of interviewees, not the number of frequencies of the use of *kare/kanojo*.

As expected, friends and workmates were most often referred to as *kare/kanojo*, and celebrities came second. However, this does not mean that these terms were continuously used. While interviewees normally talked about referents using their names, zero pronouns or demonstratives (e.g. *ano hito* = that person; *koitsu* = this bloke; *aitsu* = that bloke), they used *kare/kanojo* only occasionally.

Compared with contexts without *kare/kanojo*, those with these terms commonly exhibit a certain nature of context. Generally, *kare/kanojo* occurred in the following context types, when discussing the interviewees' friends and workmates.

- (1) Describing the referent's attributes (e.g. kind, good-hearted, efficient).
- (2) Judging the speaker's relationship with the referent (e.g. very close, confidential).

When celebrities were referred to as *kanojo* and *kare*, a similar nature of contexts was extracted.

- (1) Judging their life (e.g. tragic, not professional)
- (2) Describing their work and characteristics (e.g. different from the Japanese, weak nature)

Thus, interviewees used *kare/kanojo* when they became objectively descriptive and/or judgemental about the same referent. The utterance with *kare/kanojo*, therefore, stands out in the flow of conversation, and sounds anew, indicating the speaker's shift of viewpoints about the referent person.

When the interviewee used *kare/kanojo* during the interview, the interviewer asked him/her at the end of the interview to comment on the use of these terms.

All of them except one said that they would not use *kare/kanojo* when feeling very close to the referent, therefore, would not use them to refer to their family members. (One person said that she would use *kare* to refer to her husband when considering him as an individual person, but would not use it when being strongly conscious of him as her husband: This is shown in the Table.) Instead, they tend to use *kare/kanojo* when they are emotionally detached or when describing the referent objectively. They also said that when they are using *kare/kanojo*, they feel neutral. Three interviewees were even surprised to have the interviewer point out their use of *kare/kanojo*, and said that they happened to use these terms without thinking.

The above finding indicates that the occurrence of *kare/kanojo* is subject to the psychological state of the speaker, therefore, the same referent may or may not be referred to as *kare* or *kanojo*. The more objective the speaker becomes to the referent, the more likely it is for the referent to be referred to as *kare* or *kanojo*. This means that the use of *kare/kanojo* signals the shift of the speaker's viewpoint of the referent, changing from his/her personal and subjective relation to the referent (particularly by using demonstratives) to his/her objective and judicial, or even judgemental observation of the referent (by using *kare/kanojo*).

Although the use of these terms is limited to certain types of referent and context, a new use of *kare/kanojo* is developing in Japanese society today. This was not found when Hinds (1975) examined the subject matter twenty-five years ago. Neutral use of *kare/kanojo* is becoming prevalent, starting with reference to friends and workmates with the speaker not necessarily carrying any psychological effects, while twenty-five years ago, such effects were more astutely recognised in general.

Discussion

The findings in Section 3 generally show that compared with the time when Hinds (1975) conducted his survey, *kare/kanojo* are nowadays used more extensively, and their use has much less psychological impact on the user in social interaction. The following points show significant differences between the findings in this study and Hinds' conclusion:

- (1) Younger generations refer to their family members and relatives as *kare/kanojo*. At the time of Hinds' survey, family members were not referred to as such.
- (2) There is no gender difference in the use of *kare/kanojo* while in Hinds' study, females used them more frequently than males.
- (3) People in the public sphere (e.g. celebrities) are freely referred to as *kare/kanojo* while Hinds found that they were not. The only exception found in the present study is that members of the Japanese Imperial household are not referred to as *kare/kanojo*.

- (4) The use of *kare/kanojo* nowadays triggers much less psychological effects on the speaker while Hinds found that the extensive use of them was considered improper.

Also, the present study has found that *kare/kanojo* more frequently occur when speaker and listener are socially positioned neutrally, i.e. when their social status either is equal or does not affect them at the time of interaction (This point was not investigated in Hinds' study). Thus, even younger generations, who use *kare/kanojo* quite extensively, use these terms less often when they are interacting with socially superiors or inferiors. This means that *kare/kanojo* are most unlikely to occur in formal situations where interactants are expected to use honorifics, irrespective of the social relationship between speaker and referent person.

In relation to this finding, the data from the interviews have elaborated contexts where *karre/kanojo* occur. They show that the same referent may or may not be referred to as *kare* or *kanojo*, depending on how the speaker perceives the referent in a given context. Thus, even when the speaker can safely use *kare/kanojo*, he/she does not use them all the time as a pro-form. Occasional occurrence of these terms indicates the shifting of the speaker's viewpoint of the referent. That is, the more objective the speaker becomes toward the referent, the more likely it is referred to as *kare* or *kanojo*.

While admitting that there are still some restrictions on the use of *kare/kanojo*, the above mentioned cases indicate that something different is emerging in today's Japan when compared with twenty-five years ago. That is, *kare/kanojo* are losing the power of social indices, and are being used as merely anaphoric rather than socio-deictic. They are more often used as the means of indicating the speaker's objective view of referents. Social constraints on the occurrence of *kare/kanojo* may be still prevalent in today's Japan, but the motivation of their use is now changing from 'special connotation' to 'neutral or objective description'. In this respect, once they are used, they are mere 'pro-forms' without any deictic or psychological effects. This assumption does not consider the traditional use of *kare/kanojo* meaning the speaker's boyfriend/girlfriend, because as mentioned above, this is not a case of replacing a referent's name, but rather, usage as a common noun to denote 'boyfriend/girlfriend'.

Considering the grammatical constraints discussed above, the use of *kare/kanojo* in today's Japan can be summarised in the following way. In order to have *kare/kanojo* safely occur, the referent person should be known at least to the speaker. The relationship between speaker and listener is socially neutral, and so is the relationship between speaker and referent person. At the same time, the speaker's standpoint to the referent person should be objective or at least away from his/her personal attachment to the referent. When these conditions are all met, *kare/kanojo* most likely occur in interaction.

On the other hand, *kare/kanojo* are most unlikely to occur in the world of honorifics, where speaker, listener and referent person recognise certain social distances between them. Also, the closer the speaker feels towards the

referent person, the more unlikely it is for the referent to be referred to as *kare/kanojo*.

Conclusion

This paper has shown that the use of *kare/kanojo* has changed dramatically during the last quarter of a century. Younger generations are much less hesitant to use them to refer to people of various social backgrounds. Although the occurrence of the terms is not entirely free, and still maintains pragmatic constraints, such that the referent person should be known at least to the speaker, that he/she should not be present at the time of interaction, and that social distances should not be recognised between speaker, listener and referent person, *kare/kanojo* no longer bring special psychological effects on the speaker. That is why a new phenomenon is emerging in today's Japan, i.e. *kare/kanojo* are used for objective descriptions of the referent person.

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