

What message does the utterance 'Ooi, ocha!'⁽¹⁾ convey?

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1. Introduction

TV commercials are intentionally produced to appeal to their contemporary viewers; therefore, they are likely to reflect social trends in a particular society at a particular time. Following them diachronically, we can see how they reflect social change. In this paper, I would like to focus on a TV commercial series for a Japanese tea product: these commercials have used the same catch phrase, 'Ooi, ocha!'⁽²⁾ since 1972, so I will consider how the changes in Japanese society over these three decades has been reflected in this particular series.

There are two main reasons the commercial series strongly interests me. One is the change in the series which mirrors the society. When the first version was broadcast in 1972, I was 18 years old and clearly remember it. About 30 years later, I noticed that the commercial has drastically changed both the context and the message. The other reason is from the pragmatic interest. 'Ooi, ocha!' forms an utterance, which means 'Hey, tea!'⁽³⁾ In the commercial series, someone makes the utterance 'Ooi, ocha!' in a certain situation. Depending on who makes the utterance to whom in what context, the same utterance changes in the message.

Although there are many versions in the series, I will focus on only eight versions in the series (1972, 1976, 1979, 1986, 1990,

1994, 1996, 1999), which I find clear in the changes.

2. What message the utterance conveys

2.1 in the 1970s

When the commercial series began in 1972, the utterance 'Ooi, ocha!' was made by the man in the still captures below. The man in a *kimono* on an *engawa* (a Japanese style porch) is shown in a traditional Japanese house. Raising his voice a little, he says, 'Ooi, ocha!' to



someone off camera. In the next scene, green tea is being poured from a *kyusu* (a Japanese ceramic tea pot) into a *yunomi* (a Japanese tea cup), though the pourer is unseen. A man's voice as a narration is heard: 'Ocha to ittara ITO EN' [lit.: If you say tea, that's ITO EN (My translation)]. When

the man is just about to drink tea, an elderly woman's voice is heard from inside: 'Ooi, ocha!', which sounds as if she is mocking him a little. He gives a wry little smile. Though the woman doesn't appear on the screen, she is probably his wife.



The version in 1976 also used typical Japanese settings. A man in a *kimono* is reading in front of a *tokonoma* (a Japanese alcove) in a Japanese-style house. He looks up and says, 'Ooi!'. Then, replying 'Ocha?', a young woman timely

appears with a cup of tea and some Japanese sweets on a tray. As the picture above shows, the woman also wears a *kimono*, and she looks like the man's daughter. They smile at each other. Then the commercial

message is heard: 'Ocha to ittara ITO EN' [If you say tea, that's ITO EN].

A summer version aired in 1979 used both traditional and less traditional elements. As the following picture shows, a young woman in



western clothes is pouring cold green tea from a glass pot into a glass, while a man's voice is heard to say, 'Ooi, ocha!'. Then, an elderly man in a *kimono* appears on the screen. Sitting on a rattan chair, he calls again, 'Ooi, tsumetaino [cold one, please]'. The young woman appears with cold tea on a tray, and smiles. She is probably the

man's daughter.

As we have seen, the versions in the 1970s show a traditional Japanese style of living; such things as Japanese-style houses with *engawa* and *tokonoma*, and Japanese clothes like *kimono* are shown. In the settings, it is basically a man who asks for tea, saying, 'Ooi, ocha!'. As Table 1 (See Appendix) shows, pragmatically speaking, the main speaker is a man, and the addressee is his wife or his daughter, who is expected to serve him a cup of tea. The function of the utterance, 'Ooi, ocha!' is a *directive* in Searle's terms (Searle 1979).

The use of utterance probably reflected a reality of that time. In my memory, this kind of scene was rather common in many Japanese families in the 1970s, and the gender roles were accepted by the majority in society.⁽⁴⁾ The Cabinet Office (2004) reports: a survey in 1979 revealed 72.6% of the informants 'agreed' or 'relatively agreed' with the idea that 'A man's place is at work; a woman's place is in the home'. (See Graph 1)

Yet, at the same time, a different value was also emerging. In 1975, a commercial for a noodle product, in which a woman said 'Watashi tsukuru

hito' [I am the one who cooks] and a man said 'Boku taberu hito' [I am the one who eats], was criticized for its gender stereotyping, and soon disappeared from the screen.

2.2 in the 1980s

Social changes seem to have affected the tea commercial series. In the 1986 version, the setting is still traditionally Japanese. There is a middle-aged man in a *kimono* reading on the *engawa* of a Japanese-style house. Looking up from his book, he calls to someone inside, 'Ooi, ocha!'. Yet, there is no response to his request. He raises his voice a little, and calls again, 'Ooi, ocha!!'. No answer again. He tries once more, 'Ooi, ocha!!!'. Silence inside... The person he expects to answer seems to be out. Then, as the picture below shows, he gives up the idea of asking for tea, and makes tea himself, saying, 'Ma jibun de irerunomo iimonda [Well, it is also nice to make tea by myself]. He drinks it, and grins with delight.



In the version, the utterance 'Ooi, ocha' is also used as a *directive* from a husband probably to his wife or his daughter. In Austin's (1962) terms, *the illocutionary act* intended by the utterance is a request. In the 1970s' versions above, the utterance created a *perlocutionary effect* on the addressee, and the speaker's intention was achieved. Yet, in the 1986 version, things are different. As the addressee is not present, the speaker can not create *the perlocutionary effect* he intends.

He understands the fact that his wife or daughter is not always at home. Willingly or not, he has to accept the situation and do some house

chores by himself. The commercial illustrates increasing men's awareness of women's independence, but it only does so in a comical way. It should be noted that the traditional gender roles are still fixed here: the husband as a tea-drinker and the wife as a tea-server. As a deviation from the basic roles, the scene may appear humorous.

The social situation changed from the late 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s. The Equal Employment Opportunity Law for Men and Women, which was put into effect in 1986, freed female workers from tea-serving in principle. Quite a few women had hopes for the equality, but the reality was not so rosy. The Asahi (the morning edition, April 20, 1987: from the Asahi database 'Kikuzo') reports: some female applicants were recommended for a clerical post, while some were worried about how to cope with both marriage and heavy managerial work. The Office for Gender Equality reports the people's view concerning gender roles (See Graph 2): in 1987, 43.1% of the informants relatively agreed with the traditional value statement, while in 1990, 29.3% relatively agreed with it. The absolute majority is neither for nor against the traditional view. Such social value may have created the commercial above, which can appeal to anyone in some way.

2.3 in the 1990s

By this time, the manufacturer for the product might have found it better to omit traditional gender roles from their commercials. Yet, there was one difficulty. The catch phrase, 'Ooi, ocha!' became quite familiar to the consumers, and they adopted it as the product name (Ōi Ocha) in 1989. Because of the name, they had to use 'Ooi, ocha!', even though the utterance is likely to create the power-relationship between a tea drinker and a tea server. To avoid it, they adopted a brand-new idea. In 1990, a new version was produced with a completely different message.



Here, the setting is not a Japanese household, but icy-cold Siberia. The beautiful sunlight creates an orange glow on the snowy landscape. A man is sledging over the snow, and shouts, 'Ooi, ocha!' A man's voice is heard: 'Koko shiberia dewa ITO EN no ocha ga hitokan no kandoo deshita' [Here in Siberia,

ITO EN tea was a can of excitement!]. Men in heavy coats are happily drinking tea from cans. Then, they shout, 'Ooi!', and raise their cans in a toast.

With the new setting, the same utterance 'Ooi, ocha!' conveys a completely different message. Though the speaker is a man, the addressee is not a woman who makes tea for him, but obviously his colleagues to whom he will bring the tea. The utterance is made not to ask for tea but to tell them that he has brought the tea for them. 'Ooi, ocha!' here can be interpreted as 'Hey! I'll bring some tea.'

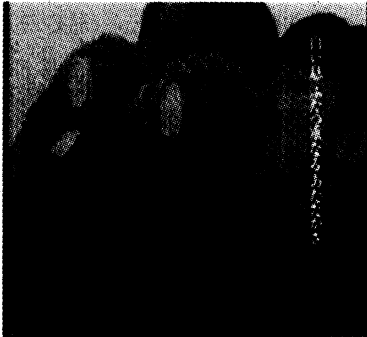
In the middle of 1990s, Japanese people's values changed even further. As Graph 2 shows, in 1995, responses to the traditional value statement, 48.0% of the informants relatively disagreed; while only 26.8% relatively agreed. Social change is also seen in the commercial series. In the 1994 version, women appear as the main characters. Here, the setting is a hot desert. There are three young women in nice clothes carrying heavy suitcases under the burning sun. They look exhausted by the heat. Finally, they collapse on the ground, moaning one after another, 'Konna toki' [on an occasion like this] 'hoshiku naru nowa' [what we want is] 'Ooi, ocha!' [hey, tea!]. These utterances are not addressed to any particular person, and they seem simply to express the speaker's

wish. In Searle's (1979) terms, it may be categorized as an *expressive*.



As if God had heard their wishes, one of the women finds (or remembers) a can of tea in the icebox she carries. She gulps the tea from the can, and shouts with joy, 'Tamannai!' [Incredibly good!]. Then, a truck comes and they wave joyfully to hitch a ride. In the version, women ask for tea, and they get it themselves.

It seems that they complete everything they want to do.



In the 1990s, a couple was also involved in this series, but their relationship appears different from traditional relationships between couples. In the 1996 winter version, the setting is a beach in mid-winter. We can see a young woman in a heavy coat standing with two cans of tea,

which she warms by a fire. While she is looking out to the sea, a group of young men, wearing Japanese-style loincloth for swimming, are coming out of the sea. One of them is coming toward her, and they hold each other tight. A woman's voice is heard: 'Shiroi iki futatsu kasanaru atatakasa' [A white breath meets another, which makes them warm]. They are seen drinking hot tea, which is steaming out of the can. Again, a woman's voice is heard: 'Ooi, ocha!'.

In the version, the woman gives her boyfriend a can of tea, but she also drinks tea herself: the gender roles as a tea-drinker and a tea-server have disappeared here. Yet, we should also note that she takes a

supporting role in the swimming meet and such a gender role is still seen here.

Focusing on 'Ooi, ocha!', it is not clear who says this and to whom it is addressed. Whoever the speaker is, the utterance sounds like an expression of the warm feelings in the woman's mind. It can be categorized into an *expressive* (Searle 1979).

In a 1999 summer version, the setting is a beach in mid-summer.



There is a young woman in a summer dress walking in the sun. Through green pine trees, she comes upon a beautiful beach. She happily says, 'Kirei!' [beautiful!], and runs barefoot toward the beach. Jumping on the hot sandy beach, she cries, 'achi achi achi!' [ouch ouch ouch!]. She joyfully plays in the

cold blue waves. A woman's voice is heard: 'Kodomono koro no natsu ga ita. Kawaiteiru jibun ni kizuita' [I met the summer in my childhood. I've found myself thirsty (for refreshment)]. From a plastic bottle, she gulps down lots of green tea. Again, a woman's voice is heard, 'Ooi, ocha!'. The utterance here is also considered *expressive*: it conveys the woman's happy free feelings in a beautiful natural setting. Though the addressee is not clear here, it sounds like a happy 'hello' to nature.

The versions in the 1990s illustrate some behaviour among Japanese women. As the pictures above show, the young woman drinks tea directly from a can or a bottle. This way of drinking was called 'rappa-nomi' [lit. bugle drink] in Japanese, and I remember being scolded for drinking that way when I was a child. At that time, it was considered bad manners, particularly for women. Yet, by the 1990s, the way of

drinking has been completely accepted. The change was also encouraged by the production of canned and plastic-bottled green tea, which was manufactured in 1985 and in 1990 respectively.⁽⁵⁾

On the other hand, the social view on the gender roles does not seem to have changed a lot in the late 1990s. The results of a social poll in 1995 and in 2000 scarcely differ from each other (See Graph 2). Other surveys reveal that tea-serving is still a woman's job in many offices: 67% of women say they serve tea (Shizuoka, the morning edition, June 12, 1999: the Asahi database 'Kikuzo'); more than 70% say only women do it (Aomori, the morning edition, July 7, 1999: *ibid.*). Despite the Equal Employment Opportunity Law, the actual effect seems difficult to make.

2.4 in the 2000s

In the 2000s, the commercial series mainly use the utterance 'Ooi, ocha!' as an *expressive*: for example, in a 2006 version, a kabuki actor gulps tea from a plastic bottle and the voice-over 'Ooi, ocha!' supposedly expresses his satisfaction. Also in other media, this particular utterance is sometimes used to highlight the social change. Examples are seen in comic strips in newspapers. In '*Nono-chan*' (the morning edition of the Asahi, June 15, 2002), the husband carelessly says, 'Ooi, ocha!', but he is not given any tea but rather meets with a fierce look from his wife. In '*Wagahai*', (the evening edition of the Asahi, March 3, 2001), to the husband's utterance, 'Ooi, ocha!', his wife answers, 'That's in your coin purse'. He rightly understands his wife's *pragmatic meaning*, and goes to the vending machine outside to buy tea.

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(ISHII Hisaichi)

(The Asahi, the morning edition:
June 15, 2002)

ワカハエ 石川しげひさ



© 砂川しげひさ
(SUNAGAWA Shigehisa)

(The Asahi, the evening edition:
March 3, 2001)

Also in *senryū*, traditional Japanese comical poems, social change is expressed. A *senryū* published in '*Sarariiman senryū*' [office worker's *senryū*] (Daichi-seimei 2003) reads: 'Ooi, ocha! Tsugino kotoba wa haittazo' ['Hey, tea! The following words are 'I've made it for you']. A husband calls to his wife, 'Ooi, ocha!', not to ask for tea, but to tell her he has made tea for her. So the traditional gender roles are reversed here.

Do they also reflect the social view? The Office reports on the

results of a poll in 2002 (See Graph 1). The results show: 14.8% agree, 32.1% relatively agree, 27.0% relatively disagree, and 20.0% disagree with the traditional view. This means that about the same number of people ($14.8\% + 32.1\% = 46.9\%$, $27.0\% + 20.0\% = 47.0\%$) differed from each other on the value. Further, the results in 2004 reveal that the total(48.9%) of 'disagree' and 'relatively disagree' is more than that (45.2%) of 'agree' and 'relatively agree'. The Asahi (the morning edition, February 6, 2005) also reported this as a noticeable change since the survey was first conducted.

Though Japanese women seem to have been empowered, are they really empowered? A report by the Office for Gender Equality (1996) says:

The division of female and male roles into, "A man's place is at work, while a woman's place is in the home," is fading. Roles are now viewed somewhat differently: "A man's place is at work, and a woman's place is at work and in the home." Over the last 20 years, men's participation in housework has risen an average of only 6 minutes a day, but more on weekends: on the average, 21 minutes more on Saturday and 25 minutes more on Sunday.

(The Cabinet Office for Gender Equality 1996)

Since then, the things do not seem to have changed a lot. Graph 3 shows who does the housework (cleaning, cooking, washing dishes), and it doesn't differ much from 1992 to 2004. In these years, husband's participation has scarcely risen, and almost all work is done by a wife. Since the economic recession, the state of affairs has become even worse. According to the report of the Cabinet Office (2004), men's working hours tend to be longer, and especially when

they have small children, the childcare burdens tend to fall on women.

3. Conclusion

We have seen how the utterance, 'Ooi, ocha!' in the commercial series has changed its pragmatic meaning, reflecting the social changes in Japan. Changing the speaker, the addressee and the setting, the utterance performed different speech acts, which generally suited the people's values at that time. Japanese people, both men and women, have changed their gender values, and not so many people simply accept any more that it is women who make tea for men.

In the same way, fewer people believe that 'A man's place is at work; a woman's place is in the home'. Compared with 30 years ago, the number of double-income households has increased. It should be noted, however, that men's participation in housework has scarcely risen during these years. The present state seems to be that more men make tea, but they do not wash dishes.

One wonders how and how much the gender roles in our society will change in the future. It will be interesting to see how this commercial series will change in future as a reflection of social change. In ten years time, who do you think will say, 'Ooi, ocha!' to whom in these commercials?

Table 1. How the commercial series has changed

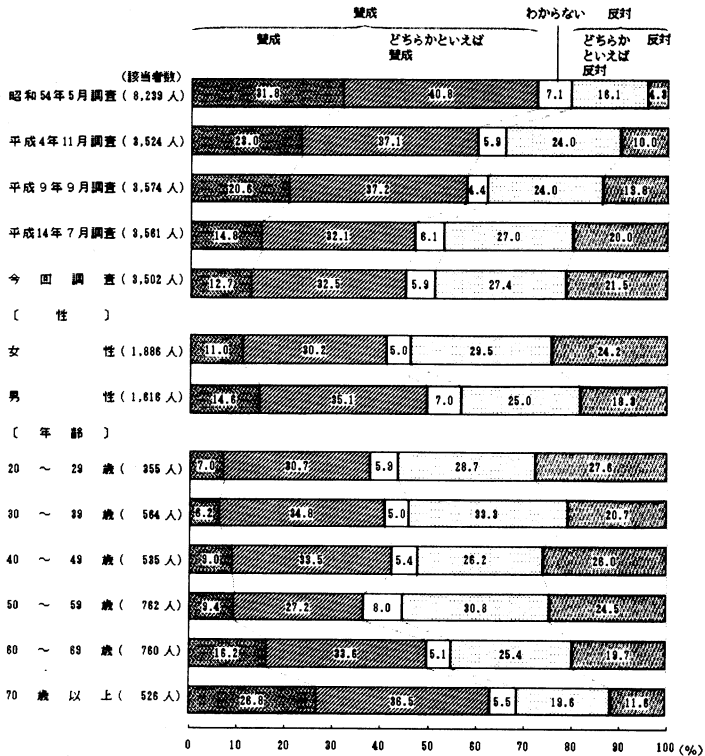
	Utterance	Speaker [supposed role]	Addressee [supposed role]	Speech act [type]	Setting Properties
1972	'Ooi, ocha.'	A man [husband]	A woman [wife]	request [directive]	Japanese-style house, engawa, sho-ji, kimono
	'Ooi, ocha.'	A woman [wife]	A man [husband]	mock?	kyuusu, yunomi
1976	'Ooi.'	A man [father]	A woman [daughter]	request [directive]	Japanese-style house, tokonoma, sho-ji, kimono
	'Ocha?'	A woman [daughter]	A man [father]	reply	yunomi
1979	'Ooi, ocha.' 'Ooi tusmetaino'	A man [father]	A woman [daughter]	request [directive]	Japanese house, rattan chair, kimono, western clothes glass pot, glass
1986	'Ooi, ocha.' 'Ooi, ocha!' 'Ooi, ocha!!!'	A man [husband or father]	A woman? [wife or daughter?]	request [directive]	Japanese-style house, engawa, Japanese garden, pine tree, kimono yunomi, kyuusu
1990	'Ooi, ocha.'	A man [co-worker]	Other men?* [co-workers]	inform [assertive]	Siberia, snow, sled, dogs, heavy coats
	'Ooi.'	Men [co-workers]	Nature	toast [expressive]	can
1994	'konnatoki'	A woman [friend]	Unknown	wish [expressive]	desert, suitcases, bag, western clothes, truck
	'hoshiku narunowa'	A woman [friend]			can
	'Ooi, ocha.'	A woman [friend]			can
1996	'Ooi, ocha.'	A woman [girlfriend]	Unknown	unclear [expressive]	seaside in winter, swimming, fire can
1999	'Ooi, ocha.'	A woman	Nature?*	unclear [expressive]	seaside in summer, barefoot, summer clothes plastic bottle

* As the speaker was not shown then, it is not clear whom the utterance was addressed to.

Graph 1: On the Value Statement:

A Man's Place is at Work; a Woman's Place is in the Home

図14 「夫は外で働き、妻は家庭を守るべきである」という考え方について



(The Cabinet Office: Report on the Social Poll on Gender Equality)

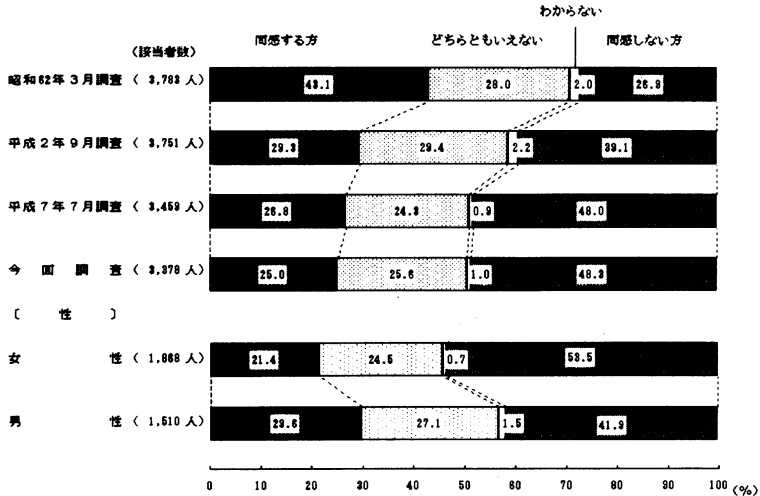
<http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h16/h16-danjo/images/z14.gif> 2006/08/31

- From top to bottom: the results of 1979, 1992, 1997, 2002, 2004, female and male of 2004, each generation of 2004.
- From left to right: 'I agree' 'I relatively agree' 'I don't know' 'I relatively disagree' 'I disagree'

Graph 2: On the Value statement:

'A Man's Place is at Work; a Woman's Place is in the Home'

図11 「男は仕事、女は家庭」という考え方について



(The Cabinet Office: Report on the Social Poll on Gender Equality)

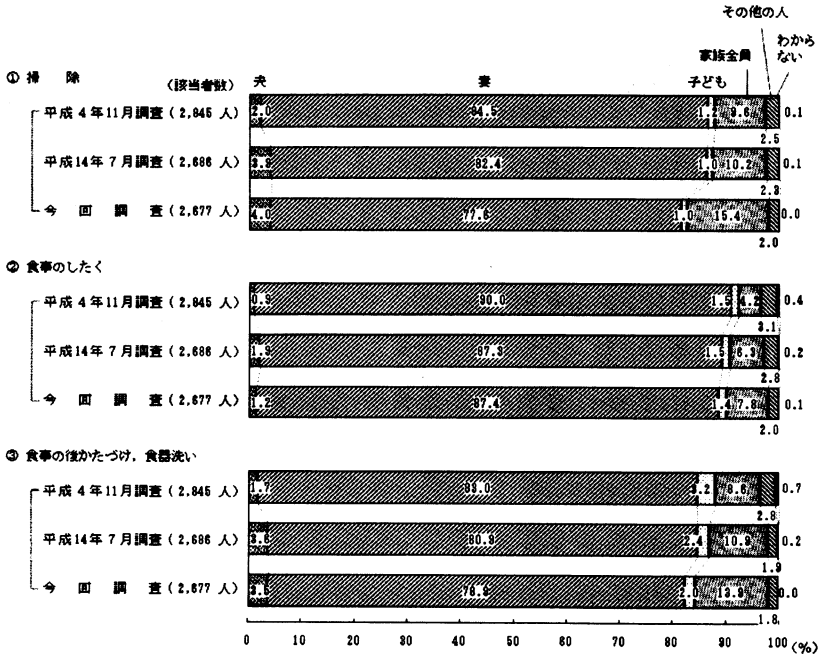
<http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h11/danijo/image/zu11.gif> 2003/08/15

- From top to bottom: the results of 1987, 1990, 1995, 2000, female and male for 2000.
- From left to right: 'I relatively agree' 'I can't say either way' 'I don't know' 'I relatively disagree'⁽⁶⁾
- (): the number of replies

Graph 3: Who does the housework

図18 家庭における家事分担

（「結婚している」、「結婚していないがパートナーと暮らしている」と答えた者に）



(The Cabinet Office: Report on the Social Poll on Gender Equality)

<http://www8.cao.go.jp/survey/h16/h16-danjo/images/z18.gif> 2006/08/31

* The informants are married or unmarried couples who live together.

● From top to bottom: ① Cleaning(1992, 2002, 2004)

② Cooking(1992, 2002, 2004)

③ Washing dishes(1992, 2002, 2004).

● From left to right: husband, wife, child(ren), all the family members, other, I don't know.

Notes

- (1) When a vowel is prolonged or the same vowel occurs consecutively, I basically (except some proper nouns) repeat the letter (e.g. 'Ooi' 'kandoo') in the romanization.
- (2) According to the manufacturer, ITO EN, LTD., they use the romanization of 'Ôi Ocha' as the product name. Referring to the product name itself, I will follow their way. Referring to the utterance, I use the romanization as mentioned above (e.g. 'Ooi, ocha!').
- (3) 'Ooi' is translated into 'hey' or 'halloo' in some Japanese-English dictionaries (e.g. Genius Japanese-English Dictionary), and 'ocha' is divided into a polite prefix 'o' and 'cha', which usually means Japanese green tea. It should be noted, however, that the connotation of 'Hey, tea!' may be rather different from the Japanese sense.
- (4) It should be noted that there were critical studies on gender issues. A list of them is shown in Kato and Tsukanezawa (1992).
- (5) The information source is a TV program, *Hanamaru Market* (TBS, June 12, 2003). The Asahi (morning, May 23, 1992: the Asahi database 'Kikuzo') also reports it.
- (6) Different answer choices were given: in 1979, 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2004, five choices are given (See Graph 1): 'I agree' 'I relatively agree' 'I don't know' 'I relatively disagree' and 'I disagree'. In 1987, 1990, 1995, and 2000 (Graph 2), four choices are given: 'I relatively agree' 'I can't say either way' 'I don't know' 'I relatively disagree'.

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