"Money attracts the *female* you want, struggle attracts the *woman* you need": The pejoration of *female* (n).

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Recently, Deborah Cameron discussed the semantic differences between *female* and *woman* in her blog *Language: A Feminist Guide,* pointing out the negativity associated with *female.* "Whereas 'woman' can feature in positive as well as negative judgments, it's hard to think of any context in which the noun 'female' is used to praise its referent: no one would say, for instance, 'my late grandmother was an absolutely marvellous female'" (2016). Though *female* can function as either a noun or an adjective, when the referent is human, *woman* (n.) is the preferred form, as in 1:

1. The *woman* in the store was helpful.

compared to 2:

2. The *female* in the store was helpful.

Female, on the other hand, is typically used as an adjective*,* as in 3:

3. The *female* store clerk.

As Cameron notes, when *female* is used as a noun, the broader semantic context is pejorative.

The present study documents an increase in the pejorative use of *female* (n.), as in example 2, over the past ten years with data from Twitter, political interviews and commentary, anti-feminist blogs, and video blogs. A total of 614 spoken and written instances of the noun *female* have been extracted and coded from these sources, 89% of which are pejorative. An analysis of the data suggests this use of *female* is undergoing a semantic shift, and its meaning has become more equivalent to *bitch* than to *woman*. In the majority of these cases, positive behavior such as 'loyalty' promotes the use of *woman,* while *female* is restricted to negative behaviors such as 'greed' as seen in example 4:

4. "Money attracts the *female* you want, struggle attracts the *woman* you need."

The data also reveals that the pejorative use of *female* has begun to replace *bitch* in common slang phrases with the head noun *bitch*, such as *basic bitch* and *thirsty bitch.* Both of these pejorative slang terms have a negative head noun, such as *bitch*, to carry the derogatory meaning. In example 5, *female* replaces *bitch*, and *miss independent bitch* refers to a *basic ass female*. While it is grammatically possible to use *basic woman* in this context, semantically it is not as pejorative as *basic female* and does not imply the same negativity*.*

5. "Unless you are one of these basic ass *females* in which case... im glad i dont pay taxs in the usa that pay your welfare 'miss independant bitch.'"

To bolster the argument that *female* (n.) is semantically pejorative, additional data suggesting that other nouns are undergoing this same shift will be presented. Nouns such as *illegals*, *poors*, and *gays*, as

shown in examples 6 and 7, demonstrate that when the plural suffix is added, a pejorative shift takes place:

6. "also this taste kinda 'if you receive your tax return and you dont need it, shred it or else *a poor* will get it by accident'"

7. "As a proud member of the middle class, I can't wait for all of the *poors* to die off."

References

Cameron, D. (2016, April 3). To gender or not to gender? (Thoughts prompted by the death of Zaha Hadid) [Web log post].