

3.9 EXAGGERATION AND HYPERBOLE

hyperbole
deliberate
exaggeration
employed for effect
and not meant to
be taken literally

sensationalise
deliberately
use sensational
(exciting,
attractive) stories
or language (e.g. in
the media to create
interest)

Exaggeration is overstatement – language designed to make something appear bigger or smaller, better or worse than it is. For example, if an author argues that ‘thousands’ of residents are up in arms about a new development project when the real number is in the hundreds, the author is exaggerating, or overstating, the issue. **Hyperbole** (from the Greek word for ‘excess’) is exaggeration taken to the extreme for dramatic effect; it is not meant to be taken literally. The statement ‘millions of teenagers are brainwashed by the idiot box every day’ is one example.

Hyperbole can **sensationalise** an issue. It adds drama or excitement, or a shocking or overhyped detail that stirs enthusiasm but can also misrepresent the facts. Sometimes exaggeration is employed in a light-hearted manner; at other times it is used cynically or seriously with the aim of stirring concern or outrage.

SOURCE 10

‘REALLY BAD THINGS’: Donald Trump’s great, tremendous, unbelievable penchant for hyperbole at the first presidential debate

By Marta Cooper

Donald Trump’s fear-mongering, crusade-laden, sensationalist, and hyperbolic rhetoric was on full display in his first debate yesterday (Sept. 26). Here are the words he relied on to make the case against Hillary Clinton, his Democratic rival for US president.

Great/greatest

Trump’s go-to superlative. ‘I will tell you I’ve been all over, and I’ve met some of the greatest people I’ll ever meet within these communities,’ he said in reference to inner city communities that, he said, are disenfranchised with their politicians. He referred to America’s relations with its allies in the Middle East as ‘the greatest mess anyone has ever seen.’ After years of publicly

questioning Barack Obama’s place of birth (which he has now backtracked on), Trump said: ‘I think I did a great job and a great service, not only for the country but even for the president in getting him to produce his birth certificate.’



Tremendous

Trump used this word 13 times throughout the debate; Clinton never uttered it. He used it to point at his rival’s health: ‘To be president of this country you need tremendous stamina,’ Trump said. He also referred to his own ‘tremendous income’ and the ‘tremendous problems America faces. He promised he would ‘be reducing taxes tremendously’ and that his income tax cut would ‘create tremendous numbers of new jobs.’

Thousands of

When Trump wants to emphasize the scale of an issue, without getting into the specifics, he talks in terms of thousands. ‘The companies are leaving,’ he said. ‘I could name, I mean there are thousands of them, they’re leaving and they’re leaving in bigger numbers than ever.’ And of violent crime in Chicago, he said: ‘In Chicago, they’ve had thousands of shootings, thousands, since January first. Thousands of shootings.’

Bad

‘So bad,’ Trump said of the red tape and bureaucracy that he claimed are forcing companies to leave the United States. ‘Our country is suffering because people like Secretary Clinton have made such bad decisions in terms of our jobs and in terms of what is going on,’ he added. When discussing gun crime and law and order, he said: ‘So there’s some bad things going on, some really bad things.’

Mess

‘We owe twenty trillion dollars [in debt], and we are a mess,’ Trump said of America’s debt. ‘We haven’t even started.’ On cybersecurity: ‘Look at the mess that we’re in. Look at the mess that we’re in.’

Disaster

Trump pointed to several of these:

- > ‘Our energy policies are disaster.’
- > ‘Your regulations are disaster, and you’re going to increase regulations all over the place.’
- > ‘[Libya] was another one of [Clinton’s] disasters.’
- > ‘We invested in a solar company, our country. That was a disaster.’

Terrible

A variant of ‘really bad things’: ‘It’s terrible. I have property there [in Chicago]. It’s terrible what’s going on in Chicago.’ Trump also accused his opponent of treating outgoing president Barack Obama with ‘terrible disrespect’ in earlier debates.

Unbelievable

Another adjective Trump wheeled out more than once. He spoke of his ‘unbelievable company’ (twice) and the ‘tens of thousands of people that are unbelievably happy and that love me.’ When discussing how to strengthen cybersecurity (or, ‘the cyber’), he marveled at how ‘unbelievable’ his 10-year-old son was with computers.

Winning

Trump referred to winning three times during the session; Clinton never mentioned it. He praised his own ‘winning fight’ and ‘winning temperament.’ Implying that the presidency was a zero-sum game of success or loss, he said of his opponent: ‘I know how to win. She does not know how to win.’

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