

Avoid hyperbole?

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Hyperbole (hipérbole) is similar in Spanish. Mortals use hyperbole to exaggerate, overstate or emphasize something or to make a point, although literally the sentence is not true.

Contemplate these examples:

- “I am so hungry that I could eat a horse”. Not literally, but this exaggeration means that you are very hungry. You have the same in Spanish, except that the image of a cow is sometimes used (tengo tanta hambre que me comería una vaca/un caballo).
- It is raining cats and dogs = It is raining heavily. An exaggeration, a hyperbole.
- Mr. Sanchez, the Spanish Prime Minister, has said to us a million times (un millón de veces) that we should pay more tax. Here the hyperbole is for emphasis.
- I am parched (thirsty). “Parched = muerto de sed, reseco.
- Ricardo`s Porsche cost him an arm and a leg. This means it was expensive (arm and a leg is an idiom = costar un ojo de la cara).

You will know the word “hype”. Advertisers often hype or exaggerate (promocionar con bombos y platillos) products and services. Politicians often “hype” their achievements in order to get your vote.

So should you avoid hyperbole? Perhaps, although sometimes it is useful to emphasize a point.