

Spitting out words

By Sarah Sloat, February 7, 2017. - [inverse.com](#)

There's not much variety to the words President Donald Trump spits out, but we know which ones are his: To Americans, words like "loser", "sad", "horrible", "weak" and "stupid" have become ubiquitous with Trump in 2017. This is likely what led the writer Phillip Roth to angrily call out Trump's "77-word" vocabulary in the most recent issue of The New Yorker. Roth's assessment of Trump's small vocabulary size may be correct, but we should be careful not to assume it means that the President is dumb.

It's become increasingly apparent to researchers that a non-expansive vocabulary isn't necessarily the sign of a failing mind; rather, it might be the hallmark of a person sly enough to hook his listeners and persuade them using only a few words. [...]

Geoffrey Nunberg, a professor at the University of California-Berkeley, wrote in The Los Angeles Times that Trump's repetitions and digressions come off as "spontaneous and genuine" to people listening at a rally. "Like most people who attend political rallies, Trump's audience came there to connect — they were already convinced," Nunberg said.

Repetition is considered a rhetorical strategy proven to produce emphasis, clarity, amplification, and emotional effect. Audiences judge spoken content differently than words they read on a page. By repeating phrases, which may look less intelligent later transcribed on paper, the speaker guarantees that their audience walks away with their most important points in mind. When Trump said in the final presidential debate that "Iran should write us a letter of thank you, just like the really stupid — the stupidest deal of all time, a deal that's going to give Iran, absolutely, nuclear weapons," he made sure that listeners linked "stupid" and "Iran" together. His statements provide no context for what he's saying, but by mashing words together he creates an emotional platform to use against his opponent. [...]

And that level of manipulation is anything but dumb.



Spitting out words

By Sarah Sloat, February 7, 2017. - [inverse.com](#)

There's not much variety to the words President Donald Trump spits out, but we know which ones are his: To Americans, words like "loser", "sad", "horrible", "weak" and "stupid" have become ubiquitous with Trump in 2017. This is likely what led the writer Phillip Roth to angrily call out Trump's "77-word" vocabulary in the most recent issue of The New Yorker. Roth's assessment of Trump's small vocabulary size may be correct, but we should be careful not to assume it means that the President is dumb.

It's become increasingly apparent to researchers that a non-expansive vocabulary isn't necessarily the sign of a failing mind; rather, it might be the hallmark of a person sly enough to hook his listeners and persuade them using only a few words. [...]

Geoffrey Nunberg, a professor at the University of California-Berkeley, wrote in The Los Angeles Times that Trump's repetitions and digressions come off as "spontaneous and genuine" to people listening at a rally. "Like most people who attend political rallies, Trump's audience came there to connect — they were already convinced," Nunberg said.

Repetition is considered a rhetorical strategy proven to produce emphasis, clarity, amplification, and emotional effect. Audiences judge spoken content differently than words they read on a page. By repeating phrases, which may look less intelligent later transcribed on paper, the speaker guarantees that their audience walks away with their most important points in mind. When Trump said in the final presidential debate that "Iran should write us a letter of thank you, just like the really stupid — the stupidest deal of all time, a deal that's going to give Iran, absolutely, nuclear weapons," he made sure that listeners linked "stupid" and "Iran" together. His statements provide no context for what he's saying, but by mashing words together he creates an emotional platform to use against his opponent. [...]

And that level of manipulation is anything but dumb.

