

**The Honourable Mr Justice Henry Litton, GBM, CBE, JP**  
Doctor of Laws *honoris causa*

Address

Mr Chairman, Mr President, Members of Lingnan, and Honoured Guests,

It is a great honour for me to deliver this Address on behalf of Dr Joseph Pang Yuk-wing, Professor Yeh Chia-ying and myself on this happy occasion, the 32nd Congregation of Lingnan, a small university but great institution which sits on the edge of the Pearl River Delta and is one of the true symbols of Hong Kong's position in the modern world.

In preparing this address, I have pondered the question as to why Lingnan should have considered me, a lawyer, worthy to stand alongside my two distinguished colleagues – a banker and a scholar-poet – to receive these Degrees *honoris causa*. One unifying factor, I suppose, is that we all deal in words: documents, as we know, govern the everyday life of bankers; and words, we like to think, are food for the soul of scholars and poets. And for us, the lawyers? Well, there was a time when contracts, wills and other written instruments were construed literally: when the strict letter of the law overrode everything else and the true meaning of the parties to a transaction had to be subordinated to the tyranny of the words they used. This, I am glad to say, is no longer the way we view documents in the courts today. This is not to say that we do not value the precision of language. It is simply a shift in perception: a recognition of the fact that lawyers, draftsmen, even the most skilled, do not always express themselves with total clarity and we make allowances for language as an imprecise instrument.

There is a world of difference between precision and pedantry, well illustrated by the story told of that great 19th century lexicographer Daniel Webster who produced the well-known American Webster's Dictionary. He was caught one morning in the kitchen by his wife kissing the chambermaid. His wife exclaimed, "Mr Webster, I am surprised!" whereupon Webster, that great master of language, looked at his wife, paused for a moment, and said, "No, Madame: It is *we* who are surprised: *You* are amazed!"

Mr Chairman, the long-term goal of Lingnan University is to develop into an internationally renowned liberal arts university with Hong Kong characteristics. One of the points of focus is language training: proficiency in Putonghua, Cantonese and English. Comprised in this proposition is, of course, something more profound; for proficiency in language necessarily means some understanding of the culture, history and social life represented by the language. No matter what area a student specializes in later on in life – be it information technology, business or one of the fields of engineering – the art of communication is crucial to success. The ability to communicate easily, in a relaxed manner, is vital in

all disciplines. Could Albert Einstein have attained his great aims in life if he was unable to communicate his ideas? Apart from being a great thinker, Einstein was also a great communicator.

Let me say a few more words about the art of communication. There is far more to it, I suggest, than acquiring the gift of the gab. There is a world of difference between talking *at* people and conversing *with* people. In his well-known book called *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey gives this advice: “First seek to understand before you strive to be understood.” For effective dialogue, there must be real understanding of the other person’s point of view. Some people treat conversation like a game of golf: you keep on hitting the same little ball, all by yourself, time after time; you eventually put it in a small black hole, to no-one’s satisfaction except your own. Others regard conversation more like tennis: you serve the ball, the other person receives, there is then an exchange, a rally. A good player tends to bring out the best in his or her opponent. That is perhaps why I am passionate about tennis, and never play golf!

Mr Chairman, in this world of ever-greater specialization and ever-narrower focus – understanding more and more about less and less – there is a crying need for liberal arts institutions like Lingnan University. You can learn at a technical college about the effect of wind-thrust on tall buildings and about Keynesian economics. But how do you learn about common sense? The well-rounded person of liberal accomplishments is more than ever needed in our society: a person imbued with a broad mind, humanity and common sense, like the great inventor Thomas A Edison who took enormous pride in his country estate, which he threw open to the public free of charge. The visitor would go through the cultivated gardens and landscaped grounds full of ingenious devices and eventually would exit through a turnstile, which was pretty heavy, rather like a revolving door. It needed some force to turn it. “Mr Edison”, asked one of the visitors, “how is it that with all these wonderful modern things around, you still have such a heavy turnstile?” Edison’s eyes lit up with laughter and he said, “Every time you push the turnstile around, you pump eight gallons of water into the tank on my roof?”

Mr Chairman, I mentioned at the beginning of this Address the symbol of Lingnan sitting on the edge of the Pearl River Delta, one of the fastest growing areas in the entire world. Almost on a daily basis, we hear of factories relocating from Latin America, from Eastern Europe, to the Pearl River Delta. This, I would suggest, is where Hong Kong is likely to find its true destiny in the post-colonial

era. If Macau, in the 16th century, in the hermetically sealed world of Chinese commerce in those days, was able to fulfill a useful (and profitable) role, is it possible that Hong Kong as an integral part of China would not find a similar but far greater role in the 21st century? I have no doubt that, in the exciting adventure that lies ahead, Lingnan University will play its full part as a liberal arts institution of the first rank, and our students will fulfill important leadership roles in Hong Kong acting as a hub of the Pearl River Delta: a hub around which the commerce of the entire western world will turn. Young persons, equipped with language and communication skills, comfortable in a multi-cultural environment, will find here a great future. I am sure I speak on behalf of my colleagues Dr Joseph Pang Yuk-wing and Professor Yeh Chia-ying when I say that we feel immensely proud to call ourselves members of Lingnan, *honoris causa*. We thank the Council for conferring upon us these high honours.

# 終審法院非常任法官烈顯倫

## 榮譽法學博士

### 致辭

主席先生、校長、各位嶺南人、各位嘉賓：

今天，嶺南大學舉行第三十二屆學位頒授典禮。在這令人歡欣鼓舞的時刻，我能代表彭玉榮博士、葉嘉瑩教授和我自己致辭，感到萬分榮幸。嶺南大學座落在珠江三角洲畔，規模小，但目標遠大，是香港位處現今世界的一個典型象徵。

在準備這篇講稿時，我思考了以下的問題：為什麼嶺南大學認為我、一個律師應得如此殊榮，與我的兩位傑出同輩——一位銀行家和一位學者詩人同時接受榮譽博士學位？我想我們的一個共同點是：我們的工作都與文字打交道。大家知道，銀行家每天離不開文件，文字被認為是學者和詩人心靈的食糧，而我們律師呢？過去有一段時間，合同、遺囑和其他文書都要按字面的意義去解釋。當時，法律的字面意義高於一切，協議各方的真正意思必須從屬於他們所使用的文字。高興的是我們今天已不再這樣處理法庭的文件了，但不等於說我們不再重視語言的準確性，只是對問題的理解力提高了，我們認識到即使是最資深的律師，最熟練文件起草人都總不能非常清晰地表達自己，我們會因語言並非絕對精確的工具而留有餘地。

精確的與墨守成規的語言相距十萬八千里。丹尼爾·韋伯斯特是著名的韋氏詞典的編纂者。這位十九世紀美國偉大的詞彙學家曾講過一個故事，充分說明了這一點：一天早上，他在廚房裏吻了他的女僕，給妻子撞上了。他妻子叫起來：「韋伯斯特先生，我真感到意外！」這位語言大師望著妻子，頓了一下，說：「不，夫人，感到意外的是我們，你是感到驚愕！」

主席先生，嶺南大學的長遠目標是發展成為一所有香港特色、在國際上享有聲譽的博雅大學。教學的重點之一是語言訓練，使學生精通普通話、廣東話和英語。當然，這目標還包含更深遠的意義，精通語言必須對語言所代表的文化、歷史和社會生活有一定的認識。學生以後一生從事什麼專業，不管是資訊、商業或工程學的任何學科，溝通藝術是成功的關鍵。在一切學科中，從容不迫地善於溝通至為重要。如果艾伯特·愛因斯坦不能表達自己的思想，他一生能取得如此輝煌的成就嗎？他不僅是偉大的思想家，與人溝通方面也做得很出色。

讓我再說幾句有關溝通藝術的話。我認為只是天生能說會道是遠遠不夠的，對人說話和與人交談是截然不同的兩回事。斯蒂芬·科維在他那本有名的著作《能人的七種習慣》中勸籲大家：「先瞭解別人，再力求讓別人瞭解你。」必須真正理解別人的觀點，才能有效地進行對話。有些人把對話看作打高爾夫球：獨自一人反復擊出同一個小球，直至把球打進小黑洞。除了自己外，誰也不滿意。其他人則把對話視為打網球：你發球，別人接球，球來球往，最後得分。一個好球員能使對手發揮得淋漓盡致，也許這就是我熱衷於打網球而從不打高爾夫球的原因。

主席先生，這個世界越來越專業化，個人的知識面越來越狹窄，因為要把更多的精力集中到更少的事情上去，迫切要求開辦像嶺南大學那樣的博雅大學的呼聲越來越高。在理工學院，你可以學到風對高樓大廈的推力作用，學到凱恩斯主義經濟(國家干預經濟)政策，你從哪兒可以學到對事物的判斷能力呢？我們的社會比以往任何時候更需要受過博雅教育的全人：胸襟開闊、博愛仁慈、通情達理，像偉大的發明家托馬斯·愛迪生那樣。愛迪生為自己的鄉間別墅感到無比自豪，向大家免費開放。參觀者穿過悉心料理的花園，欣賞風景如畫的庭院，到處是五花八門的巧妙裝置。最後走到出口處，那是個旋轉柵欄，推起來相當重，像個旋轉門。一個參觀者問：「愛迪生先生，有那麼多現代化的精巧裝置，為什麼還要用這麼笨重的旋轉柵欄呢？」愛迪生哈哈大笑，眼裏流露出智慧的光芒，說：「你們每轉一次柵欄就會把八加侖水泵到我屋頂的水箱去了。」

主席先生，前面我曾提及嶺南大學位於珠江三角洲的象徵意義。珠江三角洲是全世界發展最快的地區之一，我們幾乎每天都聽說有工廠從拉丁美洲、從東歐搬到珠江三角洲來，我想在這裏，處於後殖民主義時期的香港可能會找到自己真正的未來。十六世紀，在中國與世隔絕的情況下，澳門尚且能與她在貿易上有來往，並從中得到好處，香港作為中國不可分的一部份是否可以在二十一世紀擔當類似但更重要的角色呢？展望未來，燦爛輝煌。作為推行博雅教育的一流大學，嶺南毫無疑問將充分發揮其應有的作用，我們的學生在香港這個珠江三角洲的中心將肩負起領導的重任。整個西方世界的貿易將會轉向這個中心。掌握語言與溝通技巧、熟悉多種文化環境的年青人在這裏將大有作為。我相信彭玉榮博士、葉嘉瑩教授和我一樣，為能成為嶺南大家庭的一員而感到無比自豪。十分感謝校董會授予我們如此崇高的榮譽。