

Idiom by Lon Yan

長篇大論

chang2 pian1 da4 lun4

Chief executive Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor's maiden policy speech was long, and it would have been torturous for both speaker and audience if read out in its entirety, for it would have taken hours.

But she accepted her cabinet's suggestion to deliver a short version comprising only main points, which was wise, since no one likes people who are “長篇大論” (*chang2 pian1 da4 lun4*).

“長” (*chang2*) is “long,” “lengthy,” “篇” (*pian1*) “a chapter,” “a piece of writing,” “長篇” (*chang2 pian1*) means “lengthy (report or speech).” “大” (*da4*) is “big,” and “論” (*lun4*) “to discuss,” “a discourse,” “theory,” “opinion,” “view.”

Literally “長篇大論” (*chang2 pian1 da4 lun4*) is “a lengthy report, a big discussion.”

The expression means “a lengthy speech or article,” “to deliver a harangue (冗長的訓話).”

“長篇大論” (*chang2 pian1 da4 lun4*) is never a good way to communicate, unless your objective is to turn people off. No one enjoys a speech that is “長篇大論” (*chang2 pian1 da4 lun4*), except a speaker who likes to listen to his or her own voice.

“長篇大論” (*chang2 pian1 da4 lun4*) is never captivating, and would not be endured except by a captive audience, like students in a school assembly listening to a long-winded headmaster.

So when making a speech, writing a report, or even in daily conversation, it is always good policy to be “言簡意賅” (*yan2 jian3 yi4 gai1*) – “precise and to the point,” “concise and pithy,” “compendious” (簡明的.)

Terms containing the character “論” (*lun4*) include:

論文 (*lun4 wen2*) – a thesis; an essay

論壇 (*lun4 tan2*) – a forum

論點 (*lun4 dian3*) – line of reasoning; an argument

論據 (*lun4 ju4*) – the basis of arguments