

# The Effectiveness of the Punarcci Grammar Module

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The objective of this research is to evaluate the effectiveness of the punarcci grammar learning module for trainee teachers. This quantitative research employs a quasi-experimental design. The development and evaluation of the learning module are based on the adaptations of e<sub>l</sub>uttatikāram theory and the ADDIE model. Simple random sampling was carried out involving 46 trainee teachers who are studying Tamil Language as a major at one of the local public universities. The research subjects are comprised of 23 trainee teachers in the treatment group and 23 trainee teachers in the control group. A pre and post-test were also carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the punarcci grammar learning module. Data obtained was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS). Research findings show a significant difference between the treatment group (M = 92.65, SP = 10.27) and the control group (M = 53.5, SP = 8.8) with the value of (t<sub>19</sub> = 14.27, p < 0.05). The research concludes that the use of this learning module can improve the mastery of punarcci grammar among trainee teachers in the local university. The implication of this research indicates that the use of the punarcci grammar learning module can increase the effectiveness of the teaching and learning of Tamil grammar.

**Key words:** *effectiveness, learning module, grammar and punarcci.*



## Introduction

The history of Tamil education in the nation began with the first school in the country, Penang Free School, in 1816 (Supramani, 2007). This was the starting point for the establishment of a bilingual school with English and Tamil as the mediums of instruction in 1850 (Rajendran, 2009). However, Tamil education only gained a strong footing following British involvement in Federated Malay States in the 1870s (Utaman, 2009). The established Tamil vernacular education continues until today in our national education system. The establishment of Tamil national schools in the country also means that Tamil language is an important component in the national education system (Sufean, 1993). Tamil is one of the compulsory subjects for students at Tamil national primary schools (SJKT) and is an additional subject for secondary school students. The Tamil language subject is planned and drafted like any other subject to produce good, holistic and harmonious persons, in line with the National Education Philosophy (NEP).

The restructuring of Tamil language education began when Tamil, Malay, Chinese and English language education was restructured during the implementation of the Razak Report in 1956. Tamil and Chinese were adopted as the mediums of instruction at national schools (Supramani, 2007). Students who go through this vernacular education system are streamlined in secondary school after six years of early education at primary school. Students from Tamil or Chinese national schools will be removed from class or form one, and they then continue to Form Three Assessment (PT3), a Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) and a Malaysian Higher School Certificate (STPM).

For this reason, the Tamil Language Unit from the Curriculum Development Division under the Ministry of Education drafted the Tamil language syllabus and curriculum specifications for secondary school in 1979 (Bavani, 2012). The Integrated Curriculum for Primary schools (KBSR) and the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary schools (KBSM) emphasise listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Tamil Language Syllabus, 2001). Meanwhile, the KBSM Tamil Language Syllabus also emphasises grammar. There are four main categories of grammar in the KBSM Tamil Language syllabus – *eluttiyal* (phonology), *colliyal* (morphology), *totariyal* (syntax) and *punariyal* (morphophonemics) (Tamil Language Syllabus, KBSM, 2003). Although there have been significant changes and developments in Tamil language education at the primary and secondary school level, there are several underlying issues that have long plagued Tamil language education. These including spelling errors in writing that do not abide by the rules and conventions of the Tamil grammatical system. Several studies show that the root of this problem is the lack of strong grammar mastery among Tamil speakers (Manonmani Devi, 2015). At a deeper level, the biggest root of this problem is students' lack of '*punarcci*' grammar skills, which is an important foundation for Tamil language acquisition.

This problem requires an urgent solution before it becomes too difficult to overcome. Among the actions that could be taken is to produce quality teachers who can deliver lessons effectively. Quality teachers refer to teachers who are professional, skilled regarding theories as well as and teaching and learning practices. They are also attuned to development in education (Amin Senin, 2008). Teachers who are creative and innovative could adapt a teaching and learning idea and make it more interesting and impactful on students' performance (Wette, 2010). The teaching profession needs to be constantly developed to ensure all teachers have the diverse knowledge and skills needed to face the challenges in the world of education today.

There is no doubt that trainee teachers have a big influence on the quality and product of education (Amir Juhari & Noor Zila Md. Yusuf, 2012). Furthermore, they are the agents of social change that can change ways of thinking, attitudes and behaviour to produce improved, honourable and independent members of society (Khairul Anwar, 2014). This is because trainee teachers are the catalysts for quality teaching in education when they have strong pedagogical and professional competency (Cooze & Jantan, 2012). The competency and quality of trainee teachers are determined by the effectiveness of teaching and learning sessions implemented in the classroom (Jamaluddin Ramli, Ahmad Johari Sihes, Abd Rahim Hamdan & Muainah Ismail, 2006). Low-quality education will have a direct impact on the quality of trainee teachers as human capital in the field of education.

Trainee teachers are required to put emphasis on grammar skills in the Tamil language curriculum for Bachelor's Degrees in Teaching (PISMP) at universities (Teacher Education Division, 2009). Though there are 14 courses related to literature, pedagogy and language, only one course emphasises grammar. This is Teaching of Tamil Grammar. Throughout this course, trainees will only learn the methods and approaches to teach grammar to students without directly mastering Tamil grammar themselves.

In general, there are many problems regarding the learning of Tamil language at universities. One of the problems is that trainee teachers who teach Tamil at schools have not mastered grammar, especially *punarcci* skills (Mannar Mannan, 1995). In the KBSM Tamil syllabus, *punarcci* grammar is included in teaching and learning sessions, beginning at the primary school level. However, it is found that apart from students, teachers also have difficulty understanding and mastering *punarcci* grammar (Mannar Mannan, 1995). Consequently, the teachers are not able to teach students effectively. The students' general lack of interest in Tamil language, as well as *punarcci* grammar more specifically, is caused by difficulty mastering the rules of *punarcci*. This is neither caused by the trainee teachers' factor or low student intelligence (Suppu Reddiyar, 1995). The teachers who teach Tamil language are facing problems teaching *punarcci* grammar because of the lack of deep exposure to *punarcci*



grammar. Indirectly, this is caused by the lack of expertise in grammar at local universities as well as the Institutes of Teacher Education. Consequently, teachers have difficulties implementing teaching and learning in the classrooms. Malaysian students produce a lot of grammatical errors in Tamil writing.

Thus, the researcher aims to investigate the effectiveness of this module towards the learning of *punarcci* grammar among trainee teachers. This is because methods for teaching *punarcci* grammar could be presented as alternatives for the learning of Tamil language among trainee teachers at universities. This method will also increase the mastery of grammar. It can be applied by the trainee teachers at school and, in turn, overcome their students' weaknesses.

### **Problem Statement**

Tamil grammar is broad, deep and unique. Students and teachers lack mastery of Tamil grammar. Past studies show that teachers are still inadequate as Tamil language instructors (Kumutha, 2012). This weakness results in various language errors in words, affixes, phrases and sentence usage (Abdul Hamid Mahmood, Siti Saniah Abu Bakar, & Sanat Md. Nasir, 2012). According to Koh Boh Boon (1990), the level of grammar mastery is unsatisfactory among some trainee teachers. This is because they make errors that are unexpected. This weakness in grammar is brought into the classroom by trainee teachers, subsequently effecting the effectiveness of their teaching (Amir Juhari & Noor Zila Md. Yusuf, 2012). This finding concerning the teaching of Malay grammar is also supported by the findings of Sreetharan (1986) and Mannar Mannan (1995) concerning the teaching of Tamil grammar. Their studies found that trainee teachers commit many grammatical errors because they have not mastered Tamil grammar. They also lack the skills and awareness regarding the rules in Tamil grammar, especially in *punarcci*. *Punarcci* grammar is crucial; it is a very unique and special aspect of Tamil language.

The latest findings, based on the MoE report analysing the quality of answers from the year 2014, show that students did not equip themselves with enough knowledge and rules related to *punarcci* skills, namely *valimikum* and *valimikā itaṅkaḷ* (Ministry of Education, 2014). Students were not able to give accurate answers due to their lack of grammar mastery. As a result, they could not apply the grammatical rules to accurately combine two words.

If grammar is taught using interesting methods and suitable activities, students' interest can be boosted. Such teaching methods are not only fun, but they also help students understand grammar functionally in suitable and appropriate contexts. Thus, there is a need to implement the systematic teaching of grammar. According to Abdullah Hassan (2008), trainee teachers need to understand the elements of grammar to be able to use language effectively. This opinion is supported by Munusamy (2011), who believes that the language skills of a student

are largely dependent on his or her teacher's mastery of the language. In other words, teachers need to have full mastery of grammar to increase students' performance. He also emphasises that teachers should choose methods that are suitable for students' levels of development. However, a study by Tara Bahadur Thapa (2012) found that trainee teachers are not inclined to use different teaching methods and techniques while doing their practicum in school. The trainee teachers report that practicing teaching techniques is not part of the culture during training at the university level. As such, Sealey (1999, p. 86) asserts that 'trainees must be taught ... how to ... teach grammar systematically'.

Therefore, the teaching of grammar cannot be taught half-heartedly. Teachers must make detailed plans, especially in terms of material selection, to produce maximum results. A complete module could produce the intended results if it is carefully planned and follows the needs and levels of students. In addition, the use of simple methods that could help students master grammar quickly will contribute towards overcoming this problem. To date, there have been many studies on the quality of trainee teachers, but very few focused on the trainee teachers themselves (Abu Hassan 1995; Khairuddin 1997; MoE, 2003). With these problems in mind, a study has been carried out in which a module for *punarcci* grammar teaching is developed and tested. This is done to increase trainee teachers' mastery of Tamil grammar.

### **Significance of the Research**

This *punarcci* grammar module is developed to give effective input to trainee teachers who are doing a Tamil language course as a major subject at universities. This module will facilitate understanding in the learning of *punarcci* to allow for strong mastery of the skills involved. In other words, trainee teachers will not be limited to the traditional process of *punarcci* grammar learning. The module in this research will provide a new learning experience that is different from traditional learning. Thus, it is hoped that the development of this *punarcci* grammar module will offer a new dimension for trainee teachers to increase their mastery of *punarcci* in learning Tamil grammar.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review on Tamil grammar can be divided into two aspects. The first aspect regards general research that is not closely related to this research. Most of this research focused on certain methods as the medium of their research. A study titled '*Ilakkana karpittalil: Cikkalkalum cila thiirvukalum*' by Vengadammaal (2012) explained that students who study Tamil lack interest in Tamil grammar. Many students from the primary to university level do not have much interest in learning grammar. This is caused by ineffective teaching methods, which make students perceive learning Tamil grammar as tedious. He



asserts that more exciting techniques could help students develop greater interest in Tamil grammar.

This finding is also supported by Munusamy (2011). He emphasises that a student must master Tamil grammar as it is an important aspect in Tamil language. Weak mastery of Tamil grammar will cause students to have difficulties in speaking, reading and writing. Meanwhile, good mastery of grammar will help students to produce quality writing and enable them to answer examination questions correctly. Therefore, Tamil language teachers should employ various methods and techniques when teaching Tamil grammar to increase students' interest.

Additionally, research titled 'Analsis kesalahan dalam karangan 353ahasa Tamil di kalangan pelajar tingkatan empat [Error Analysis in Form Four Students' Tamil Essay Writing]' found that grammar mistakes are the main cause of students' weakness in essay writing. This shows that students are unable to have mastery of Tamil language. Although students are given exposure through various activities in language learning, they still lack interest in learning the language, especially regarding grammar. Students need to have skills in vocabulary, grammar and sentence structure to avoid making mistakes, especially in essay writing (Vijayaletcmy, 2003).

A study by Pavai (2009) examined the use of Information Communication Technology methods in the teaching of Tamil language among Tamil language teachers in several Tamil schools located in Selangor. This study only touched on grammar. In the context of the present research, similarities can be seen in their evaluation of the effectiveness of a particular method for teaching Tamil grammar. However, there is a significant difference: The present research focuses on teachers' effectiveness when using the method. Therefore, an easy learning module should be prepared when writing the curriculum for Tamil language.

The second aspect is research on research titles. Such pieces of research, however, have their own weaknesses and are more general in nature. One such piece is a study by Susila Bai (1979), who presented a paper at the 11<sup>th</sup> Seminar at Hyderabad University. Susila Bai (1979) outlined several difficulties faced by Tamil speakers. Among the problems listed were the difficulties mastering Tamil *punarcci* skills. This study gave some insight into the perception of the native users or speakers regarding the aspect investigated in the research.

Another piece of research was conducted by Kumutha (2012), who analysed sentence construction in Tamil essay writing at the University of Malaya. One of the issues identified was that problems in essay writing become obvious due to students' failure to master *punarcci* skills in Tamil language. This becomes a prominent obstacle and makes writing difficult. This study suggested that there is a need for the teaching of *punarcci* grammar to be restructured to overcome the problems in the teaching and learning of Tamil in general.



Sreetharan (1986) conducted a piece of research that analysed errors in the writings of trainee teachers at a teaching institute. This study found that most of the mistakes made by trainee teachers leaned towards spelling errors caused by their failure to master *punarcci* skills in Tamil language. Sreetharan's study is related to the present research, since trainee teachers from a teaching institute are the subject of the study. The research also highlights the weak mastery of *punarcci* grammar, especially among trainee teachers. This issue requires attention so that the problem is not transferred to schools, thus affecting Tamil language teaching and learning.

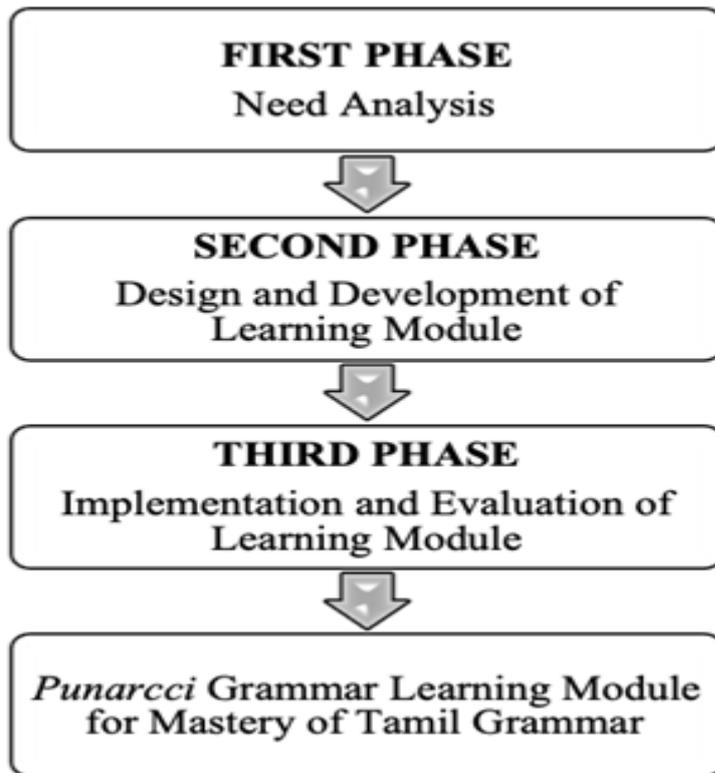
Mannar Mannan (1995) also conducted research involving trainee teachers who majored in the teaching of Tamil language. The focus of this research was writing skills in Tamil language. This study found that some of the skills not mastered by trainee teachers were *punarcci* skills. Like the studies of the previous three researches, this study also gave an insight into the reality at Institutes of Teacher Education. Thus, there is a strong justification to conduct this research to investigate the extent to which the teaching of *punarcci* grammar would help overcome this problem.

### **Research Methodology**

This research is designed and developed based on the ADDIE model. It involves five main phases. These are analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation of the constructed module. However, in this study, the research describes the effectiveness of *punarcci* grammar module for the mastery of Tamil language by dividing the research into three main phases. These are need analysis, module design and development and module implementation and evaluation. The framework for research procedures is as illustrated in the figure below:

**Figure 1**

*Main research procedures*



After the module was developed and verified by a panel of experts, the implementation and evaluation of the module were carried out. Sample selection was made randomly at a selected local university. The sample consists of trainee teachers who take Tamil language as a major in a bachelor's degree program at a local university. 46 respondents were involved in this phase; 23 respondents were in the control group and 23 respondents were in the treatment group. Both groups went through *punarcci* grammar learning intervention. The treatment group used the constructed *punarcci* grammar module while the control group used the traditional teaching of *punarcci* grammar.

The implementation was carried out by doing a post-test to both groups. The objective of each pre-test was to figure out the homogeneity of the respondents in the research. Afterwards, the intervention process was carried out nine times for both treatment and control groups. At the end of this process, post-tests were carried out to measure the empirical effect of the module implementation among selected trainee teachers. The following is the schedule of the intervention process involving the treatment and control groups.

**Table 1**

*The implementation process of the punarcci grammar module for the treatment group*

No	Date	Subject	Learning hours
1	21.07.18	Ice-breaking Questionnaire Pre-test (50 structured questions) Summary	4
2	06.08.18	<i>marabu Punarcci</i>	3
3	26.08.18	<i>Kudriyalugaram</i>	4
4	02.09.18	Vocal + vocal	4
5	16.09.18	Consonant + vocal	3
6	06.10.18	Vocal + consonant	6
7	04.11.18	Consonant + consonant	3
8	18.11.18	<i>Idaiccol</i>	3
9	18.11.18	<i>Uriccol</i>	3
10	25.11.18	Post-test (50 structured questions) Summary	3
<b>Total</b>			36

Table 1 shows that the implementation of the *punarcci* grammar module for the treatment group involved ten meetings with a total of 36 hours. The first meeting took four hours and it involved an ice-breaking session, the administering of a questionnaire, a pre-test for all respondents and a brief summary on the *punarcci* learning method carried out. Afterwards, eight independent learning sessions were carried out. These were *marabu Punarcci*, followed by *kudriyalugaram*, vocal + vocal, consonant + vocal, vocal + consonant, consonant + consonant, *idaiccol* and *uriccol*. In the last session, a post test was administered to the respondents involved. Finally, the researcher made a summary to obtain feedback from the students in the research regarding the use of the constructed *punarcci* grammar learning module.

**Table 2**

*The implementation process of the punarcci grammar module for the control group*

No	Date	Time (hours)	Subject
1	26.7.18	2	Questionnaire Pre-test
2	22.11.18	2	Post-test

Table 2 shows that the implementation of punarcci grammar learning for the control group. It involved two meetings over a total of four hours. The first meeting took two hours. It involved ice-breaking session with respondents, the administering of questionnaires and pre-tests to all respondents and a brief summary about the research that would be conducted. The control group then continued to attend class as usual using the traditional method of learning *punarcci* grammar. After this group went through the intervention process, a post-test was administered to students for post intervention evaluation.

A quasi-experimental study using paired samples T-test analysis was carried out. Findings from the pre and post-tests were entered to SPSS to be analysed. A paired samples T-test is an inference analysis to identify the effect of difference between groups. Data was analysed to obtain the significance level,  $p$  value and effect size from eta squared analysis. Findings from this phase were used to test the research hypothesis as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant difference between the treatment group and control group after the intervention process was carried out.

### **Research Findings and Discussion**

The evaluation tests from both groups were evaluated and entered to SPSS to identify the empirical effect of using the *punarcci* grammar learning module. Findings on the effectiveness of the *punarcci* grammar module for the mastery of Tamil language are determined as follows:

1. step one: identifying the homogeneity of variance,
2. step two: finding the overall significant data,
3. step three: comparing mean value, and
4. finding the effect size of paired samples T-test analysis

The purpose of testing the homogeneity of variance is to find out if the backgrounds of the selected research respondents have equivalent traits. The homogeneity of variance is tested by comparing the mean values in the pre-tests for both groups. The analysis involved in this step is the paired samples T-test of findings of the pre-tests of the treatment group and control group.

**Table 3**

*Paired samples T-test of the treatment group and control group pre-tests*

Sample	Mean/standard divide	Standard deviation	Mean difference	Significance value, <i>p</i>	Df	t
Treatment	51.25	6.57	3.50	0.288	19	1.148
Control	47.75	7.66				

Table 3 shows the findings of paired samples t-test analysis of the treatment and control groups for each pre-test. The table shows no significant difference between the treatment group samples and control group samples with the value of ( $t_{19} = 1.148, p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, findings from the pre-test show that there is no difference between the two groups. They also show that the samples from the groups had similar levels of mastery and perception towards the learning of *punarcci* grammar before the intervention process was started. After determining that the two sample groups were similar, the intervention process was started and the evaluation of the post-test was finally carried out.

The second step in the quasi-experimental analysis was to determine the overall significance of the data. Paired samples t-test analysis of the evaluation was carried out as follows:

- a. Comparison between pre and post-tests of treatment groups
- b. Comparison between pre and post-tests of control groups
- c. Comparison of post-tests between treatment and control groups

**Table 4**

*Paired sample T-tests of pre-tests and post tests*

Sample	Pre-test		Post test		Mean difference	Significance value	t	df
	<i>M</i>	<i>SP</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SP</i>				
Treatment	51.25	6.57	92.65	10.27	41.40	0.0002	14.39	19
Group	47.75	7.66	53.50	8.78	5.75	0.024	3.524	19

Table 4 shows the paired samples T-test of the pre-test and post-test for each group of the research respondents. As shown in the table, there is a significant difference between the pre and post-test of each group. The difference for the pre-test and post-test of the treatment group is  $t_{19} = 14.39, p < 0.05$ , and the difference for the pre-test and post-test of the control group is  $t_{19} = 3.524, p < 0.05$ .

**Table 5**

*Paired samples T-Test for treatment group and control group's post-tests*

Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference	Significance value, <i>p</i>	Df	<i>t</i>
Treatment	92.65	10.27	39.15	0.0001	19	14.27
Control	53.5	8.80				

The paired samples t-test for the treatment group and control group's post-tests indicates significant differences in the post-test results of the treatment group and the control group ( $t_{19} = 14.27, p < 0.05$ ). Next, the mean difference in the two sample groups was identified. Table 4.8 shows a mean difference of 39.15 between the two groups. Finally, after it was determined that there is a significant effect on the treatment group compared to the control group, the magnitude of the module implementation's impact on the treatment group was calculated. This effect was measured using the following formula:

$$Eta\ squared = \frac{t^2}{t^2 + (N - 1)}$$

Table 4.10 shows the *t* value of 14.27 and N value of 46. Based on the formula above, the effect size identified is 0.91. Cohen (1988) explained that low effect value is 0.01, moderate effect is 0.06 and high impact is 0.14. Therefore, there was a high impact on the treatment group after the intervention process.

A paired samples t-test analysis was carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the *punarcci* grammar module for the mastery of Tamil language among trainee teachers in the selected university. A pre and post-test were administered to the treatment and control group. Research findings show a significant difference between the treatment group ( $M = 92.65, SP = 10.27$ ) and the control group ( $M = 53.5, SP = 8.8$ ) with the value ( $t_{19} = 14.27, p < 0.05$ ). The mean difference between the treatment group and control group is 39.15 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 33.40 to 44.89. Furthermore, the effect size between groups was high with an eta squared statistical value of 0.91.

To summarise, findings from the pre-test prior to the intervention process indicate that the control and treatment groups have equivalent traits and therefore qualified for the intervention process. After each intervention, a post test was carried out to evaluate the effectiveness of the module. Findings from the evaluation of each post-test showed that the use of the *punarcci* grammar module resulted in significant differences between the treatment group compared and the control group after the intervention. This indicates that the module used in the intervention process was effective and had a significant effect on the treatment group compared to the control group. These results are in line with the findings of Aszoura



Muhammed Salleh (2007), who found that the use of a learning module can increase mastery level as well as gain students' interest and motivate them. Thus, based on the findings of this research, the objectives of the study are met. The constructed *punarcci* grammar learning module is effective in implementation involving trainee teachers in the public university in the context of this research. This study also shows that the use of the *punarcci* grammar module for mastery of Tamil language among trainee teachers at the public university is effective in improving grammar skills.

## **Conclusion**

This study has presented answers for the research questions regarding the *punarcci* grammar learning module. The research has verified the effectiveness of the *punarcci* grammar module for trainee teachers. There are three phases in this developmental research. Overall, this learning module has implications for the Ministry of Education, Malaysian public universities, lecturers, trainee teachers at universities and Institutes of Teacher Education as well as Tamil language teachers. Finally, based on this research, it is proposed that further studies should be carried out to ensure continuity in the work of improving and spreading the knowledge of Tamil grammar, particularly regarding *punarcci*.

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