In Dharmakṣema’s version, the chapter of the Great Eloquence Deity consists in her address to the Buddha. She who governs over eloquence promises to augment the expounder’s eloquence (p.344c21–23):

爾時大辯天白佛言，世尊，是說法者，我當益其樂說辯才，令其所說莊嚴次第善得大智。

At this time, the Great Eloquence Deity said to the Buddha: “Venerable One, for this expounder of the Law, I will augment his joy in expounding and talent in speech (eloquence) so as to make his exposition magnificent in order that he obtain, soon and well, great wisdom.”

As eloquence is dependent on knowledge and memory, the goddess assures that she will provide the expounder with both. If in the sutra—whether as memorized by the monk or as written/copied in a manuscript—there should be either missing words or inaccurate meanings of phrases, she will see to it that he regains them.\(^1\) If the monk has a manu-

\(^1\) Although the order in which I usually list references is first the Sanskrit then followed by the Chinese translations, I begin here with Dharmakṣema, as it is the earliest version of the sutra, then the reprint of the same Dharmakṣema in Baogui’s edition, and only afterwards the extant Sanskrit, followed by Yijing’s translation. In this chapter I will quote primarily from Dharmakṣema’s Chinese version, noting discrepancies in the Sanskrit and in the two other Chinese renditions. For the Sanskrit and Chinese versions together with translations in comparative columns, see Appendix A.

\(^2\) 若是經中有失文字句義違妄，我能令是說法比丘次第還得。“If in this sutra there are missing words or the meaning of the phrases is wrong, I can make the bhikṣu expounding this Law regain [them] soon” (Dharmakṣema, p.344c23–24). The extant Sanskrit (p.103, lines 2–4) mentions only lost or forgotten words and letters (yāni kānicīt padav yaḥ jñāṇāni ... paribhrasṭāni bhaviṣyanti vismaritāni ca), and not erroneous meanings. Yijing (p.434b30–c1), on the other hand, follows Dharmakṣema’s version, specifying what I would suggest means both words and meanings of phrases that have been forgotten and lost (文字句義所有忘失). Note that Nobel (1958a, p.229) translates this passage in Yijing as ‘die Bedeutung von Silben und Worten’ (‘the meaning of syllables and words’).
script of the sutra before him as he expounds it, there might be various missing letters, words, or meanings in the text in front of him, a text which he has at some point likely memorized. He may therefore recognize these errors, not only because of what he recalls from memory, but also because of his understanding of the contents of the sutra. He is hence divinely authorized to emend the text where necessary through the gifts of memory and knowledge imparted to him by Sarasvati. The forgotten letters, words, or meanings may also be inherent in the version of the sutra he has memorized, but he may not have recognized them. These shortcomings can likewise be overcome through the blessings of the goddess. Furthermore, it may be his own memory or understanding that experiences lapses: the text he has memorized as well as the text before him might be perfectly accurate, but the expounder may have forgotten some of the letters or words and misunderstood some of the intended meanings. In all these, as well as other, possible scenarios, Sarasvatī promises to help the expounder of the sutra.

The goddess announces, moreover, that she will teach him a dhāraṇī (zongchi 总持 ‘complete hold’), a talismanic charm or spell, to prevent loss of memory.3 The Sanskrit word dhāraṇī comes from the root dhṛ ‘to hold, bear, maintain,’ and is hence literally translated into Chinese as ‘complete hold’ (zongchi 总持). For purposes of clarity Yijing adds also the phonetic transcription of dhāraṇī: tuoluoni zongchi 陀罗尼总持 ‘dhāraṇī-[i.e.,]‘complete hold.’”4 That which Sarasvatī gives the preacher ‘to hold’ in memory is at the same time that which will allow him to hold on to what he has learned/memorized so as not to forget it. The dhāraṇī is both the means of remembrance, as well as remembrance itself. Hence Jens Braarvig translates dhāraṇī as ‘memory’ in the corresponding passage of the Sanskrit: “… I will give him memory so he does not lose remembrance” (dhāraṇīm cānupradāśyāmi smrtyasampramoṣaṇāyā).5 The fact that no incantatory formula appears following this passage supports Braarvig’s interpretation. Nevertheless, the term dhāraṇī reappears

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3 能與總持令不忘失。“I can give him a ‘complete-hold’ that will prevent loss of memory” (Dharmakṣema, p.344c24–25).

4 Yijing, p.434c1–2. Nobel (1958a, p.229, note 3) suggests that zongchi wuai 總持無礙 is the term for dhāraṇī, but while tuoluoni zongchi 陀羅尼總持 does indeed correspond to dhāraṇī, wuai 無礙 ‘without obstacle’ goes with smṛtyasampramoṣaṇāya ‘for the sake of preventing loss of memory’ in the Sanskrit (p.103, lines 5–6) and buwangshi 不忘失 ‘prevent loss of memory’ in Dharmakṣema (p.344c24–25).