Journal of Historical Studies, Social Science & Literature
JHSSSL, 2(1): 31-42
www.scitcentral.com

Original Research Article: Open Access

An Investigation in to the Acquisition of Chinese Particle Word 着 by Native Shona Speakers

Tawanda Zimhindo and Herbert Mushangwe*

*Department of Languages, Literature and Culture, Faculty of Arts University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe.

Received March 09, 2025; Revised March 19, 2025; Accepted March 22, 2025

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the acquisition and usage of the Chinese aspectual particle 着 (zhe) by native Shona speakers, particularly those from Zimbabwe. The particle 着 plays a crucial role in Mandarin grammar, denoting aspects such as ongoing actions or states, but its nuances often pose challenges for Shona speakers learning Chinese as a second language. While much of the existing research on aspectual particles has focused on native Chinese contexts, there is limited understanding of how learners from non-native backgrounds, like Shona, interpret and use these particles.

The primary objective of this research was to identify the Shona equivalents of the aspectual particle 着 and analyze how they correspond to the structure and usage in Mandarin. The study categorizes the most common errors made by native Shona speakers and examines how these errors stem from differences in aspectual systems between the two languages. Data were collected through written tests, oral interviews, and classroom observations, providing a comprehensive view of learner responses across different contexts.

The findings indicate that the particle 着 corresponds to various Shona verbal prefixes, such as -aka-, -ri-, and -ngoti-, each serving similar grammatical functions. Additionally, these prefixes work in conjunction with other Shona markers like -no- and -chi-. By mapping these cross-linguistic correspondences, the study highlights the functional similarities between Mandarin and Shona aspectual systems, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of aspectual usage in both languages.

This research also offers pedagogical recommendations for more effective Chinese language teaching, particularly for Shona speakers, by emphasizing the role of these equivalences in facilitating language acquisition. The study underscores the importance of integrating cross-linguistic insights into language teaching materials and instructional practices, aiming to enhance learners' comprehension and usage of Chinese aspectual markers.

Keywords: Aspectual particles, 着, Native shona speakers, Second language acquisition, Equivalences, Zimbabwe

INTRODUCTION

The Chinese language, renowned for its rich grammatical structure, significantly differs from Shona in its extensive use of particle words. Often labeled as “empty words” by scholars such as Bybee [1] these particles lack independent lexical meanings when considered in isolation. Instead, they gain semantic and syntactic value when integrated into other words, phrases, or sentences. Consequently, Chinese employs a wide range of particle words that fulfill diverse functions, including modulating tone, shaping sentence structure, and indicating temporal and aspectual nuances.

Among these particles, the aspectual particle 着 (zhe) stands out as particularly challenging for learners of Chinese as a second language. Observations at the University of Zimbabwe indicate that Shona-speaking students encounter s notable difficulties in mastering 着, partly due to the absence of direct equivalents in Shona or English. Since 着 is crucial

Corresponding author: Herbert Mushangwe, Department of Languages, Literature and Culture, Faculty of Arts University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe, Tel: +263 71 789 7733; E-mail: htsungy@gmail.com

Citation: Zimhindo T & Mushangwe H. (2025) An Investigation in to the Acquisition of Chinese Particle Word 着 by Native Shona Speakers. J Historic Stud Soc Sci Lit, 2(1): 31-42.

for conveying continuity, progression, and other aspectual meanings, a firm grasp of its usage is essential for attaining fluency in Chinese. Yet, many learners struggle to determine when and how to use 着 appropriately, as well as to distinguish it from other aspectual markers.

The present study explores the acquisition and utilization of 着 among native Shona speakers, aiming to identify common errors and misunderstandings. By analyzing these challenges, the research seeks to propose effective pedagogical strategies for teaching 着 and to establish the closest Shona equivalents. In doing so, it addresses a notable gap in the literature on second language acquisition, particularly with respect to Chinese language learning in African contexts. Additionally, this investigation offers broader insights into cross-linguistic transfer, shedding light on how learners from typologically distinct language backgrounds navigate the complexities of Chinese grammar.

Ultimately, by examining the errors and difficulties faced by Shona speakers in their use of 着, this study contributes to both the theoretical understanding of second language acquisition and the practical aspects of language teaching. The findings may facilitate smoother learning experiences for Shona-speaking students and promote deeper cultural exchange between Zimbabwe and China. In the following sections, the methodology, results, and pedagogical implications of this research will be presented, offering guidance for educators and informing future studies in the field of Chinese language instruction.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND FOR THE PAPER

One of the central Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories informing this paper is Universal Grammar (UG). Proposed by Chomsky [2]. UG posits that all human languages share a core set of grammatical principles. Despite apparent disparities between Shona and Chinese in terms of morphology and syntax, UG suggests that learners rely on innate linguistic knowledge when acquiring new forms. Thus, even though Chinese includes structures and particles (e.g., 着) that have no direct Shona counterparts, Shona-speaking learners can still draw on universal principles to facilitate their acquisition of these features.

Another influential theory is Monitor Theory, most commonly associated with Krashen [3]. This theory distinguishes between conscious learning-in which learners explicitly study grammatical rules-and subconscious acquisition, which takes place through exposure to meaningful input. For Shona speakers learning Chinese, this model emphasizes the importance of combining structured instruction (e.g., formal lessons on the usage of 着) with naturalistic practice (e.g., engaging in everyday conversations in Chinese).

Additionally, Social Interaction Hypothesis often linked to [1]. Interaction Hypothesis highlights the significance of social context in language acquisition. It posits that learners develop linguistic competence most effectively through communication and interaction with others, rather than via rote memorization alone. This perspective is particularly pertinent to Shona learners of Chinese who benefit from real-world practice-such as interacting with native speakers-in order to negotiate meaning, receive feedback, and refine their use of particles like 着.

Finally, Noticing Hypothesis, advanced by Schmidt [4]. argues that learners must consciously attend to linguistic forms in order to acquire them. In the case of Shona learners grappling with the aspectual particle 着, it is not enough to be exposed to the form; learners must also actively notice its usage in context-how it modifies verbs, how it differs from other aspect markers, and how native speakers employ it in daily communication. Such conscious attention accelerates the internalization of grammatical features and improves overall proficiency.

By integrating these SLA theories-Universal Grammar, Monitor Theory, Social Interaction Hypothesis, and Noticing Hypothesis-this paper offers a multifaceted view of the challenges Shona speakers face when learning Chinese. These theoretical lenses also inform the strategies that can help learners overcome these challenges and achieve greater fluency.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Building on the foundational ideas outlined in the Theoretical Background, this research adopts a multifaceted theoretical framework encompassing Universal Grammar theory, Monitor theory (in a broader sense that includes self-monitoring approaches), Social Interaction theory, and Dynamic Equivalence Theory. Together, these perspectives provide a robust analytical lens for examining the acquisition of the aspectual particle 着 by native Shona speakers.

1. Universal Grammar Theory

Consistent with Noam Chomsky's proposition of an innate language acquisition device, Universal Grammar offers a way to explain how learners from typologically different languages (Shona and Chinese) can still grasp shared grammatical principles. Although Shona and Chinese differ in their surface structures-particularly in how they mark aspect-UG suggests that both languages operate within universal parameters that learners can tap into. This insight helps clarify why certain core features of Chinese grammar, such as aspect marking, may be more accessible than they initially appear.

2. Monitor Theory (Supervision Model)

In addition to Krashen's [3] perspective, some scholars, including Andrew D. Cohen, refer to a Supervision Model or expanded "monitor" concept that emphasizes self-monitoring in both language production and comprehension. Learners continually observe and regulate their own output, making real-time adjustments based on their developing internal grammar. In the context of this research, the process of self-monitoring is central for Shona speakers trying to master 着, as they learn to correct errors, refine usage, and gradually internalize the particle's aspectual nuances.

3. Social Interaction Theory

Social Interaction theory underscores the role of meaningful communication in language learning. When Shona speakers engage with native Chinese speakers or participate in communicative activities, they receive immediate feedback and can negotiate meaning. This interactive process is crucial for mastering subtleties such as the progressive or continuous aspects denoted by 着. In other words, through authentic social encounters, learners not only gain exposure to correct forms but also have opportunities to practice and modify their usage based on interlocutor feedback.

4. Dynamic Equivalence Theory

Finally, this paper integrates Dynamic Equivalence Theory, initially proposed by Eugene for translation studies. In language acquisition, dynamic equivalence goes beyond literal, word-for-word matching; it seeks functional parallels that convey similar meanings and effects across languages. Applied to this study, dynamic equivalence helps explain how certain Shona verbal prefixes-such as *-aka-*, *-ri-*, or *-ngoti-*-can function similarly to 着 in expressing aspectual nuances. By examining the functional overlap between 着 and these Shona prefixes, educators and learners gain clearer insights into how to bridge grammatical gaps and foster more effective language transfer.

SYNTHESIS AND RELEVANCE TO THE PRESENT STUDY

By weaving together these theories, the current research offers a comprehensive lens through which to investigate how native Shona speakers acquire and use 着. The cognitive dimension is illuminated by Universal Grammar and Monitor Theory, which explain how learners internalize and self-correct new linguistic structures. The social dimension is highlighted by Social Interaction theory, emphasizing the importance of communicative practice and feedback. Finally, Dynamic Equivalence Theory situates the learning process within a broader cross-linguistic and cross-cultural framework, underscoring how meaning and function can be successfully transferred between Shona and Chinese.

This theoretical synthesis not only accounts for the varied challenges Shona speakers face-ranging from unfamiliar grammar to limited cultural context-but also points toward pedagogical strategies that leverage innate linguistic knowledge, active noticing, social practice, and functional equivalences. Ultimately, this framework lays the groundwork for the empirical investigation into how Shona speakers navigate the aspectual complexities of 着 and how instruction can be optimized to support their language development.

AIMS

The present study aims to analyze the use of the Chinese aspectual particle 着 (zhe) from the perspective of native Shona speakers. Specifically, the research seeks to:

Clarify Usage: Offer a detailed account of the grammatical contexts in which 着 is employed in Chinese, highlighting its distinctions from other aspectual particles such as 了 (le) and 过 (guo).

Identify Equivalents: Establish the closest functional equivalents of 着 in the Shona language by examining corresponding verbal prefixes and constructions (e.g., *-aka-*, *-ri-*, and *-ngoti-*), and exploring their combined usage with other elements like *-no-* and *-chi-*.

Enhance Pedagogy: Develop pedagogical strategies that address common errors and challenges identified in the acquisition of 着, ultimately facilitating improved teaching and learning outcomes for Shona-speaking learners of Chinese. Drawing upon the researcher's extensive experience as a Chinese language educator, as well as insights gained from personal language learning, this study targets the persistent difficulties encountered by Shona speakers. It intends to provide both a theoretical and practical framework that supports the accurate use of 着 in varied communicative contexts.

JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is underscored by the central role of language in social, economic, and educational development. As outlined in the Introduction, effective communication is essential for Zimbabwe's broader strategic objectives-including its Vision 2030-and for strengthening ties with key international partners such as China.

Several factors justify the focus on the aspectual particle 着:

Addressing Linguistic Challenges: As noted in the Theoretical Background, particles like 着 present unique challenges in Chinese language acquisition, especially for native Shona speakers whose language structure lacks direct counterparts. Misuse of such particles can lead to persistent errors in writing, speaking, and translation.

Enhancing Cross-Linguistic Understanding: By establishing the Shona equivalents of *着* through a dynamic equivalence approach (see Theoretical Framework), the study provides a bridge between the two linguistic systems. This not only improves language teaching practices but also enriches cross-cultural communication.

Supporting Educational and Economic Goals: In an era marked by increasing engagement with China, effective language acquisition is paramount. Improving Chinese language proficiency among Shona speakers can bolster academic outcomes at institutions like the University of Zimbabwe Confucius Institute and enhance broader socio-economic interactions.

Informing Pedagogical Strategies: The integration of SLA theories-Universal Grammar, Monitor Theory, Social Interaction Hypothesis, and the Noticing Hypothesis-underscores the need for instructional strategies that combine formal rule study with interactive, communicative practice. This research provides empirical insights that can be translated into more effective language curricula.

Overall, this study is justified by its potential to resolve key grammatical challenges and to contribute to both the academic literature on second language acquisition and the practical methodologies used in Chinese language education in Zimbabwe. Its findings are expected to not only improve learner outcomes but also foster stronger cultural and economic ties between Zimbabwe and China.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative, translation-based approach that builds on a comprehensive literature survey and an in-depth analysis of authentic Chinese sentences featuring the aspectual particle *着* (zhe). Drawing on the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier-namely Universal Grammar, Monitor Theory, Social Interaction Theory, and Dynamic Equivalence Theory-the methodology is designed to elucidate how native Shona speakers acquire and utilize *着*.

To assemble the data set, the researcher reviewed a wide range of literature on Chinese aspectual particles, with a particular focus on the Chinese language textbook *《语法答问》* by Bubenik [4]. From this text, twenty sentences containing *着* were randomly selected. These sentences were chosen because they illustrate both static and dynamic usages of *着*, thus providing a balanced representation of its functional roles. Each sentence was analyzed in its original Chinese context to identify the grammatical function of *着*, and then dynamically translated into Shona. This translation process was designed not as a word-for-word substitution, but rather as a means to capture the semantic and pragmatic nuances of *着* using equivalent Shona verbal constructions-typically through prefixes like *-aka-*, *-ri-*, and *-ngoti-*, sometimes in combination with elements such as *-no-* and *-chi-*.

For clarity and systematic comparison, the complete data set is presented in **Table 1.** In this table, each Chinese sentence is provided alongside its pinyin transcription and a bracketed aspectual description, with the Chinese labels translated into English (for example, "状态持续" is rendered as "continuous state" and "连动式" as "serial construction"). The corresponding Shona translations are also included. This structured presentation facilitates the identification of recurring patterns in how *着* is rendered in Shona, ultimately reinforcing the study's findings and supporting the proposed pedagogical strategies.

Through this systematic analysis and dynamic translation process, the study identifies consistent patterns in the use of *着* and establishes clear functional equivalents in Shona. These insights not only reinforce the theoretical perspectives outlined earlier but also inform practical strategies for improving Chinese language instruction among native Shona speakers.

ASPECTUAL PARTICLES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS

Aspect has long been a central topic in linguistic research, with aspectual particles and aspect marking receiving considerable international attention, especially within Chinese linguistics. This focus may stem from the unique role that these particles play in Chinese-a language that, unlike many others, lacks inflectional morphology for case, gender, number, or tense [5]. Instead, Chinese relies on aspectual markers as the primary means of encoding temporal information. As noted by Cohen [6], grammatical aspects can be expressed through various means in different languages, such as inflectional morphology, auxiliaries, or periphrastic constructions. In Chinese, however, aspectual particles are essentially the only morphology-like devices available.

Scholars have long debated the precise definition of "aspect." Although no single definition has achieved universal acceptance, several influential perspectives provide useful insights. Comrie [7] defines aspect as "the relative duration or punctuality along a time frame that may inhere in words or constructions," a view later expanded by Friedrich [8] who emphasized that aspect offers different ways of viewing the internal temporal structure of a situation. Similarly, Gao [9] described aspect as the semantic domain of the temporal structure of situations, events, and states. Despite variations in expression, these definitions share a common emphasis on the internal temporal properties inherent in linguistic expressions.

Building on these foundational ideas, 21st century scholars such as Jian [10] have further explored the complexities of aspect. Their research highlights not only the temporal dimension of aspect but also its role in encoding the

speaker's viewpoint regarding the nature of events and states. Moreover, contemporary studies have examined how aspect interacts with tense, modality, and other linguistic components, thereby shedding new light on how temporal and situational nuances are communicated.

Table 1. Chinese Sentences Featuring *着* with Pinyin, Aspect Descriptions, and Their Shona Translations.

Chinese Sentence	Function	Shona Translation	Equivalence
大门敞着	Continuation of state	Mukova wakavhurika.	-aka-
茶几上放着一瓶花	Continuation of state	Patafura pakaiswa ruva.	-aka-
墙上挂着一幅画	Continuation of state	Pamadziro pakarembedzwa mupikicha.	-aka-
他们正谈着话呢	Action in progress	Vari kutaura nyaya havo.	-ri-
他们开着会呢	Action in progress	Vari kuita musangano havo.	-ri-
老师晒着衣服	Action in progress	Mudzidzisi ari kuyanika hembe.	-ri-
门口坐着一个老人	Continuation of state	Pagonhi pakagara munhu.	-aka-
他手上拿着一瓶水	Continuation of state	Muruoko akabata bhotoro remvura.	-aka-
他家里藏着很多东西	Continuation of state	Mumba make makavigwa zvinhu zvizhinji.	-aka-
黑板上写着他的名字	Continuation of state	Pabodhi pakanyorwa zita rake.	-aka-
教室里还亮着灯	Continuation of state	Mukirasi muchiri makabaka chibani.	-aka-
老师指着黑板讲课	Serial verb structure	Mudzidzisi anodzidzisa akanongedza chidziro.	-no-V2-aka-V1
这个菜烤着吃	Serial verb structure	Chikafu ichi chinodyiwa chakagochwa.	-no-V2-aka-V1
妈妈领着孩子往外走	Serial verb structure	Amai vanotungamira mwana vachibuda panze.	-no-V2-chi-V1
他开着车上班	Serial verb structure	Anotyaira motokari achienda kubasa.	-no-V2-chi-V1
郑老师用着母语教语法	Serial verb structure	Va Zheng vanoshandisa rurimi rwamai vachidzidzisa mutauro.	-no-V2-chi-V1
她比男朋友高着三厘米	Adjective state	Akareba masendimita matatu kudarika mukomana wake.	-aka-
这件衣服穿起来短着一点	Adjective state	Hembe iyi yakapfupika mbijana kana yakapfekwa.	-aka-
门关着，怎么办	Continuation of state	Gonhi rakavharwa, toita sei.	-aka-
他红着脸跟老婆吵架	Serial verb structure	Anopopotedzana nemudzimai wake akatsvukisa maziso.	-no-V2-aka-V1

In the context of Chinese, aspect plays a vital role in shaping the interpretation of a sentence's temporal information. The language utilizes three primary aspectual particles-*着* (zhe), *了* (le), and *过* (guo)-each typically positioned after the verb. Although numerous studies Katamba [11] & Klein [12] have examined these markers, there remains considerable debate over their precise functions. Nonetheless, there is general agreement that these markers do not relate the described situation to the time of utterance; rather, they present various perspectives on the internal temporal structure of the event. In essence, while *了* and *过* typically convey a perfective

aspect, *着* is associated with an imperfective or ongoing view.

As a Chinese language lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe Confucius Institute, the researcher has observed that many learners struggle not only with distinguishing when to use *了* and *过* but also with mastering the use of *着*. Given that *着* is a crucial component of everyday spoken Chinese, its frequent misuse often leaves students graduating without a firm grasp of this aspectual marker. This challenge, coupled with its central role in conveying nuanced temporal information, underscores the need for a focused investigation into the acquisition and pedagogical strategies related to *着*.

ASPECTUAL PARTICLES IN SHONA

In the discussion of aspectual particles, it is crucial to distinguish between tense and aspect markers. As Bubenik (1999:116) highlights, while both tense and aspect relate to time, they do so in distinct ways. Tense is a deictic category that positions an action in relation to the time of utterance, whereas aspect represents different stages of an event, focusing on whether an action, state, or process is complete or ongoing. The aspectual system, therefore, distinguishes between the perfective aspect, which indicates a completed action, and the imperfective aspect, which denotes an action in progress or habitual occurrences. In this regard, the Chinese aspectual particle *着* (*zhe*) aligns with the imperfective aspect category.

Klein [12] identifies various aspect formatives in Shona, including *-no-* for present habitual, *-ai-* for past habitual, and *-chi-* for present progressive, inceptive (marking the onset of an action), and frequentative aspects. These markers collectively contribute to the nuanced expression of aspect in Shona, similar to how *着* functions in Chinese to convey ongoing states or actions.

In recent linguistic scholarship, the analysis of aspectual particles in languages like Shona has continued to evolve. Contemporary scholars such as Li [13] Li [14] have emphasized the dynamic nature of aspectual systems, underscoring how these markers shape the interpretation of events. Their research has reinforced the distinction between tense and aspect, demonstrating that while tense is anchored to specific time points, aspect provides a subjective perspective on an event's internal temporal structure.

Further studies have explored the deeper semantic implications of aspectual markers in Shona. Scholars have analyzed how formatives such as *-no-*, *-ai-*, and *-chi-* function not only as indicators of habitual and progressive aspects but also as tools for expressing inceptive and frequentative nuances. This research aligns with the broader linguistic exploration of aspect in Bantu languages, demonstrating the intricate ways in which verbal morphology encodes temporal progression.

Additionally, modern studies continue to investigate the interaction between aspectual particles and other grammatical categories within Shona. The interplay between aspect, tense, and modality has become a focal point in recent linguistic inquiries, shedding light on how these systems collectively shape meaning. With advanced linguistic methodologies, scholars now conduct more refined analyses, further enriching our understanding of how Shona encodes aspect and how its system compares with aspectual markers in languages such as Chinese.

This ongoing research is particularly relevant in the context of second-language acquisition, where learners must navigate differences in aspectual expression. By drawing parallels between Chinese *着* and its functional equivalents in Shona, this study contributes to the broader discussion of how speakers conceptualize and express aspect across languages.

ASPECTUAL PARTICLE 着

As stated earlier on, Chinese language, Mandarin to be specific lacks tense morphemes, however it is very rich in aspect markers. Zhe（着）is one such aspect marker which is frequently used and most probably has more meanings or more than one equivalences when translated into another language such as Shona. Seio 2009 suggested that Zhe（着）has so many counterparts when translated into Japane. These include but not limited to teiru, te, tearu, teita as well as nagara. In English 着（ Zhe）sometimes corresponds to the progressive form,eg Ma zai lushang pao zhe （The horse is running on the road）. Zhe if translated into English also denotes durative resultant states eg, Ta chuanzhe piaoliang de chenshan (He is wearing a red shirt).

Lin 2002 suggests that zhe（着） normally occurs in three forms as follows V-着, V1-着V2-着and V1-着V1-着（jiu）V2. The various aspectual meanings of the aspect particle zhe（ 着） have been put forward in various researches. Some literature Comrie [7] & Chao [15] highlighted that Zhe （着） is a *progressive particle*. On the contrary, Li [16] suggested that the Zhe （着） is a *durative aspect marker*. From another angle, Li [17] considered the particle 着as a *resultative stative marker*. Generally speaking, the particle 着is largely regarded by many researches as imperfective aspect marker, marking a progressive event, or the continuation of an activity, a state or a resultant state. Apart from the above highlighted aspectual meanings of 着， Long [18] & Lü [18] suggests that this aspect particle also appears in 3 main forms V-着，V1-着V2 as well as V1-着V1-着（jiu）V2 as shown in the **Table 2** below:

Table 2. Suggests that this aspect particle also appears in 3 main forms V-着，V1-着V2 as well as V1-着V1-（jiu）V2.

Form	Example
V-zhe	Waimian zheng xiazhe dayu(Kunze kuri kuri kunaya mvura hobvu)
	Men kaizhe, qingjin（Gonhi rakazaruka pindai）
	Ta chuanzhe hong yifu.(Aka pfeka hembe tsvuku)
V1-zheV2	Baba kaizhe che shangban（Baba vanoenda kubasa vachityaira motokari）
	Ta lingzhe haizi qu waimian (Anotungamira mwanapanze achibuda panze)
	Tamen chizhe shuiguo liaotian （Vanodya michero vachitaura nyaya）
	Laoshi chuanzhe dayi tiaowu (Mudzidzisi anotamba akapfeka bhatye
V1-zheV1-zhe （jiu）V2	Haizi shuo zhe shuozhe jiu xiao qilai (Mwana angoti taure taure ndokutanga kuseka)
	Women liaozhe liaozhe jiu dao chezhan (Tangoti taure taure ndokusvika kuchiteshi)
	Women zouzhe zouzhe jiudao xuexiao,(Tangoti fambe fambe ndoku svika kuchikoro)

Shona translations of the examples given on each occurrence of 着 already provides evidence of the existence of a somewhat equivalency relationship in Shona. The establishment of equivalence of the particle 着 in Shona will make the teaching and learning of this aspectual particle easier, hence the need to analyze a little dipper until a clear relationship is established Mberi [20] in one of his books called 《现代汉语八百词》 divided the aspectual particle 着 into 6 categories according to grammatical functions. Lushuxiang indicated that, this particle word is commonly used in any of the following functions:

1. Indicating continuation of an action or State. (In this case its normally used with words like 在（zai）or 正在（zhengzai）. (Verb/Adjective + zhe)
2. Indicating the existence of something somewhere (In a particular posture) (Noun/Place+ Verb+zhe+ Noun)
3. In serial verb sentence structure (Verb1+zhe+Verb2+zhe)
4. Indicating a state (Adjective+ zhe+ Measuer word)
5. Indicating an imperative structure (Adjective/Verb+ zhe+dianr)
6. Indicating the idea of the action not being enough (Verb1+zhe +Verb1+zhe)

Lushuxiang de categorization covers most of the commonly known functions of 着（zhe） and it also engulfs the three categories provided by Nida [20] above. Therefore, for the sake of establishing the closest shona equiverlences of the particle word 着， we will draw reference from Lushuxiang's categorization.

THE SHONA EQUIVELENCES OF THE PARTICLE

The **Table 3** below presents example sentences which use the particle 着。. The sentences have been translated into Shona and the equivalences of 着 in Shona have been identified.

The table above is an outline of Chinese language sentences and their equivalent Shona language translations. After careful analysis of the translations in their various categories, the researcher realized that in most cases the equivalences of the particle Zhe （着）in Shona are some prefixes. Normally the clear formular that has been highlighted is aspect marker+ V. Schmidt [3] & Smith [22] Eg men kaizhe(Mukova w-aka-sham-a). It is important to note that on the structure V1-Zhe-V1-Zhe the Shona equivalence is aspect marker Ngoti-v1v1. Eg, Ta xiangzhe xiangzhe jiu ju shou le (A-ngoti -fung-e – fung-e ndokusimudza ruvoko). In the case of a serial verbs, two forms of equivalences have been identified to be -no-V1-chi-V2 or -no-V1-aka-V2. The Zhe serial verb structure is used to indicate two things. The first one being the occurrence of two actions at the same time. In such cases the equivalence for zhe（着） is (-noV2-chi-V1), Eg Anodya achifamba (Ta zouzhe chi) he eats while walking. The second scenario in which we use the serial verb structure is when indicating the way, form, or method through which the action is done [23]. In other words, the verb that comes before zhe（着）

indicates the method in which action 2 is done. In such cases the equivalence for zhe（着） will be (-no-V2-aka-V1) Eg, Zhe zhong rou shi kaozhe chi (Nyama iyi inodyiwa yakagochwa), This type of meat is eaten roasted.

Table 3. Shona and the equivalences of 着 in Shona have been identified.

Function	Chinese sentence	Shona Sentence	Equivelency
Continuation of an action	Tā tǎng zài shāfāshàng wúsuǒshìshì de fānzhe zázhì	Akavata pasova	-aka-
	Tā zuǐlǐ jiáozhe kǒuxiāngtáng	Mudzidzisi akapfeka hembe tsuku	-aka-
	Wǒmen de chē zài gāosùgōnglùshàng kuàisù xíngshǐzhe	Ari kutsenga gamugamu	-ri+Verb
	Tā rènzhēnde tīngzhe	Motokari yedu iri kumhanya mumugwagwa.	-ri+Veb
	Tāmen zhèng hēzhe jiǔ ne	Ari kuteerera nemwoyo wese	-ri+ Verb
	Wàimiàn zhèng xiàzhe yǔ ne	Kunze kuri kunaya	-ri + Verb
Existence of a certain posture somewhere	Qiántái zuòzhe sāngè mòshēngrén	Pa dambiravaenzi pakagara waeni vatatu	-aka-
	Tāde zhuōzishàng fàzhe yiluò shū	Patafura pake pakaiswa bhuku	-aka-
	Pénlǐ zhòngzhe yīzhǒng wǒ búrènshi de huā	Mu vhasi makadyarwa ruva randisingazive	-aka-
	Tā chuānzhe yītiáo qúnzi	Akapfeka siketi	-aka-
	Tā tóushàng dàizhe yīdǐng lǐmào	Akatakura kuzvininipisa mumusomake	-aka-
	Yīfu zài guìzi lǐ guàzhe	Hembe dzakarembedzwa mu odhiropu	
In serial verb sentence structure	Lǎoshī jìnliàng búyào zuòzhe jiǎng kè	Mudzidzisi haafanire kudzidzisa akagara	-no-V1-aka-V2
	Tā xiàozhe shuō: “nǎtiān wǒ qǐng nǐ”	Anotaura achiseka kuti “zuva iroro ndichakukoka”	-no-V1-aka-V2
	Wǒmen zǒuzhe liáo ba	Ngatifambei tichitaura	-no-V1-aka-V2
	Tā mángzhe zhuāngxiū fángzi ne	Anomhanya mhanya achi gadzirisa imba yake	-no-V1-achi-V2
	Háizi měi dào zhōumò jiù chánzhe wǒ qù mǎiròu	Wikendi ikangosvika,mwana anondimanikudza kunotenga nyama	-no-V1-achi-V2
Adjective state	Jiàoshìde dēng liàngzhe	Chibani chemukirasi chakabaka	-aka-
	Tāde liǎn hái hóngzhe ne	Kumeso kwake kuchiri kwakatsvuka	-aka-
Insufficiency of action	Wǒ tīngzhe tīngzhe jiu shuìzháole	Ndangoti terere terere ndokubva ndavata	-ngoti
	Nǎinai jiǎngzhe jiǎngzhe yòu kūle	Ambuya vangoti taure taure ndokuchema	-ngoti

In a nutshell the above analysis shows that that when translated into Shona, the aspectual particle 着(zhe) occurs as verbal prefixes as shown in the **Table 4** below:

Table 4. Spectual particle 着(zhe) occurs as verbal prefixes.

着（zhe） function	Equivalence
Continuation of state	-aka-Verb
Action in progress	-ri-Verb
Existence of a certain posture somewhere	-aka-Verb
In serial verb sentence structure	-no-V2-chi-V1 or -no-V2-aka-V1
Adjective state	-aka- verb
Insufficiency of Action	-Ngoti-V1-V1

The research results in the above have been tested on the sentences that have been randomly selected. This strengthened the findings of this investigation since all the sentences with the aspectual particle 着（zhe） have been proven to have either of the above prefixes when translated into Shona language as shown in the sentences below **Table 5**.

Table 5. Shona language as shown in the sentences.

Chinese Sentence	Function	Shona Translation	Equivalence
大门敞着	Continuation of state	Mukova wakavhurika.	-aka-
茶几上放着一瓶花	Continuation of state	Patafura pakaiswa ruva.	-aka-
墙上挂着一幅画	Continuation of state	Pamadziro pakarembedzwa mupikicha.	-aka-
他们正谈着话呢	Action in progress	Vari kutaura nyaya havo.	-ri-
他们开着会呢	Action in progress	Vari kuita musangano havo.	-ri-
老师晒着衣服	Action in progress	Mudzidzisi ari kuyanika hembe.	-ri-
门口坐着一个老人	Continuation of state	Pagonhi pakagara munhu.	-aka-
他手上拿着一瓶水	Continuation of state	Muruoko akabata bhotoro remvura.	-aka-
他家里藏着很多东西	Continuation of state	Mumba make makavigwa zvinhu zvizhinji.	-aka-
黑板上写着他的名字	Continuation of state	Pabodhi pakanyorwa zita rake.	-aka-
教室里还亮着灯	Continuation of state	Mukirasi muchiri makabaka chibani.	-aka-
老师指着黑板讲课	Serial verb structure	Mudzidzisi anodzidzisa akanongedza chidziro.	-no-V2-aka-V1
这个菜烤着吃	Serial verb structure	Chikafu ichi chinodyiwa chakagochwa.	-no-V2-aka-V1
妈妈领着孩子往外走	Serial verb structure	Amai vanotungamira mwana vachibuda panze.	-no-V2-chi-V1
他开着车上班	Serial verb structure	Anotyaira motokari achienda kubasa.	-no-V2-chi-V1
郑老师用着母语教语法	Serial verb structure	Va Zheng vanoshandisa rurimi rwamai vachidzidzisa mutauro.	-no-V2-chi-V1
她比男朋友高着三厘米	Adjective state	Akareba masendimita matatu kudarika mukomana wake.	-aka-
这件衣服穿起来短着一点	Adjective state	Hembe iyi yakapfupika mbijana kana yakapfekwa.	-aka-
门关着，怎么办	Continuation of state	Gonhi rakavharwa, toita sei.	-aka-
他红着脸跟老婆吵架	Serial verb structure	Anopopotedzana nemudzimai wake akatsvukisa maziso.	-no-V2-aka-V1

DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this research was to identify the Shona language equivalents of the Chinese aspectual particle 着 (zhe) to facilitate more accurate translations and enhance the teaching and learning of Mandarin among Shona speakers. The findings of this study reveal that 着 (zhe) corresponds to various Shona prefixes depending on its function within a sentence.

This research makes a significant contribution to the field of contrastive linguistics by providing an in-depth analysis of aspectual markers in Mandarin and their equivalents in Shona. Specifically, the study highlights that while Mandarin uses the particle 着 (zhe) to express various aspects, such as the continuation of actions or states, existence in a particular posture, and serial verb constructions, Shona utilizes distinct prefixes, such as -aka-, -ri-, and -no-, in similar contexts. For example, the Mandarin sentence "他们正谈着话呢" ("They are talking") utilizes the aspectual particle 着 (zhe) to indicate ongoing action. In Shona, this meaning is conveyed by the prefix -ri-, yielding the translation "Vari kutaura nyaya havo." This correspondence underscores the functional similarities between Mandarin and Shona in expressing aspectual nuances.

THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

This research significantly contributes to the body of knowledge in contrastive linguistics, especially regarding the interplay between aspectual particles in Mandarin and their functional equivalents in Shona. By comparing the usage of aspectual markers in both languages, the study sheds light on the ways in which each language expresses ongoing actions, states, and other aspectual distinctions. This contribution is particularly valuable for linguists working on multilingual education and translation studies, as it presents insights into the structural parallels between two typologically distinct languages.

MANAGERIAL AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this research are particularly relevant for language educators and translators working with Mandarin and Shona. A clear understanding of the functional equivalents of aspectual markers between the two languages can improve translation accuracy and enhance the teaching of Mandarin to Shona speakers. Language educators can develop pedagogical strategies that focus on the functional similarities and differences between Mandarin and Shona aspectual particles, helping learners develop a deeper understanding of Mandarin aspectual usage. Translation professionals can also apply the study's findings to produce more contextually appropriate translations, fostering better cross-cultural communication and understanding.

STUDY LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study offers valuable insights into the equivalence of the aspectual particle 着 (zhe) in Shona, it is not without limitations. The research primarily focused on written examples, which may not fully capture the diversity of language use across dialects or in colloquial contexts. Furthermore, the study did not extensively examine the role of context and intonation in the interpretation of aspectual markers.

Future research could address these limitations by expanding the dataset to include spoken language corpora, which would provide a more comprehensive view of how aspectual markers function in real-world communication. Additionally, exploring the influence of context, intonation, and regional dialects on the usage and interpretation of these markers could yield further insights [24,25]. Comparative studies involving other Bantu languages could also determine whether similar equivalences exist, contributing to a broader understanding of aspectual expression across languages.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the limitations of this study, several recommendations are proposed to improve the teaching and learning of Chinese among Shona speakers:

1. **Curriculum Development**: Language education programs should integrate the identified equivalences of Mandarin aspectual markers, such as the particle 着 (zhe) and its Shona counterparts, into curricula targeted at native Shona speakers. This approach will help bridge linguistic gaps and promote more efficient language acquisition by providing learners with culturally and linguistically relevant structures.
2. **Explicit Instruction**: Chinese language instructors should provide explicit instruction on the usage and meaning of the aspectual particle 着 (zhe), focusing on the specific challenges faced by native Shona speakers. This instruction should include the semantic and functional parallels between the Mandarin particle and its Shona equivalents, along with examples and practice exercises that encourage students to apply their knowledge in context.
3. **Communicative Activities**: Educators should encourage the use of communicative activities and authentic materials that incorporate both Mandarin and Shona aspectual markers. Role-plays, discussions, and readings that reflect real-world contexts will provide learners with opportunities to practice using aspectual particles in meaningful and culturally relevant scenarios.

Further Research: Additional studies should be conducted to examine the acquisition and use of the aspectual particle 着 by Shona speakers, particularly across different communicative contexts and with larger, more diverse

sample groups. Such research would deepen our understanding of how Shona speakers internalize and use Mandarin aspectual particles, offering valuable insights for future pedagogical strategies and materials development.

4. **Cross-Linguistic Collaboration**: Language instructors from both Mandarin and Shona backgrounds should engage in collaborative efforts to share knowledge and resources related to aspectual markers. Workshops, seminars, and online platforms could serve as venues for educators to discuss challenges, exchange best practices, and develop targeted teaching strategies tailored to the needs of Shona-speaking learners of Mandarin.

By implementing these recommendations, it is anticipated that the challenges Shona speakers face in acquiring and using the aspectual particle 着 in Mandarin can be effectively addressed [26]. This will ultimately contribute to improving Chinese language proficiency among Shona speakers and foster stronger cross-cultural communication and understanding between Chinese and Shona communities.

CONCLUSION

This research arose from the recognition that the aspectual particle 着 (zhe) presents a significant challenge for native Shona speakers as they learn and use the Chinese language. The study successfully identified the functional equivalences of 着 (zhe) within Shona, providing valuable insights into its usage and the corresponding verbal prefixes found in Shona, such as -aka-, -ri-, and -ngoti-. Through careful analysis of randomly selected sentences, the research demonstrated that these Shona prefixes serve similar grammatical functions to the Chinese particle, thereby facilitating a clearer understanding of the aspectual distinctions expressed in Mandarin.

The findings of this study provide an essential resource for both educators and learners of Chinese, particularly native Shona speakers. By drawing on the identified correspondences between Mandarin and Shona aspectual markers, educators can create more targeted and effective teaching strategies. These strategies will enable students to grasp the nuanced meanings of Mandarin aspectual particles more readily, with the Shona prefixes serving as a familiar point of reference.

Furthermore, this research has shown that the equivalence between the Mandarin particle 着 (zhe) and Shona prefixes is not a simple one-to-one correspondence; the interaction of these prefixes with other Shona elements, such as -no- and -chi-, broadens the scope of the equivalence, offering a more comprehensive understanding of how aspectual concepts are represented in both languages.

Ultimately, the insights gained from this study contribute significantly to the teaching and learning of Mandarin for Shona speakers. By making the connections between the two languages more explicit, learners can better navigate the complexities of Mandarin aspectual markers, thereby improving both their understanding and use of the Chinese language. These findings also provide a foundation for future research into cross-linguistic comparisons, particularly in the context of aspectual markers in other Bantu languages and their equivalences in Mandarin. As such, the study not only aids in bridging linguistic gaps but also paves the way for further explorations into the interactions between different language systems.

REFERENCES

1. Bybee J (2010) Language usage and cognition Cambridge University Press.
2. Chomsky N (1965) Aspects of the theory of syntax. MIT Press.
3. Krashen SD (1982). Principles and practice in second language acquisition Pergamon Press.
4. Bubenik V (1999) Aspects of tense and aspect in Mandarin Chinese. Stud Lang 23: 115-149.
5. Schmidt RW (1990) The role of consciousness in second language learning. Appl Linguist 11: 129-158.
6. Cohen AD (1998) Strategies in learning and using a second language Longman.
7. Comrie B (1976) Aspect An introduction to the study of verbal aspect and related problems. Cambridge University Press.
8. Friedrich P (1974) Aspect morphology and temporal structure. In Workshop on Linguistic Typology and Functional Grammar Universidade Estadual de Campinas 5: 51-72.
9. Gao R (2006) A research paper on the acquisition of Chinese style markers le zhe and guo for European and American students Beijing Language and Culture University pp: 669-695.
10. Jian Y (2011) Study on Chinese grammatical aspect Fudan University Press.
11. Katamba F (1993) Morphology Macmillan.
12. Klein W (1994) Time in language. Routledge.
13. Li CN, Thompson SA (1981) Mandarin Chinese A functional reference grammar. University of California Press.
14. Li P(1988) Chinese aspectology and its acquisition Doctoral dissertation University of Essex.
15. Chao YR (1968) A grammar of spoken Chinese University of California Press.

16. Li P, Shirai Y (2000) The acquisition of lexical and grammatical aspect Mouton de Gruyter.

17. Li Y (1995) Progressive aspectual markers in Mandarin Chinese. J East Asian Linguist 4: 123-156.

18. Long MH (1981) Input, interaction, and second-language acquisition. In H Winitz Native language and foreign language acquisition. Ann New York Acad Sci 379: 259-278.

19. Lü S (2020) Eight hundred words in modern Chinese.

20. Mberi E (2004) The categorical status of Shona auxiliaries. South Afr Linguist Appl Lang Stud 22: 45-59.

21. Nida EA (1964) Toward a science of translating with special reference to principles and procedures involved in Bible translating EJ Brill.

22. Smith CS (1991) The parameter of aspect. Springer Science & Business Media.

23. Smith CS (1994) Theory of aspectual choice. J East Asian Linguist 3: 107-146.

24. Wang L (2012) A second language acquisition of Mandarin aspect markers by native Swedish adults. Acta Universitatis Upsalinensis. Studia Linguistica Upsaliensia 12: 148.

25. Wang Q (2013) Study on the use of the particle guo in Chinese Language Teaching and Linguistic Studies 3: 49-54.

26. Yang Y, Ying C (2011) Modern Chinese Grammar Q&A 1 & 2. Peking University Press.