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## An Investigation into the Acquisition of Chinese Aspectual particles “**过**guo” and “**了**le” by native Shona speakers

Tawanda zimhindo<sup>1</sup>, Herbert mushangwe<sup>2</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The use of the Chinese language aspectual particles 过(guo) and 了(le) is very confusing for native Shona speakers yet these two particles are an important part of Chinese language grammar. Many researches have already been done regarding these Chinese aspectual particles by Chinese scholars. However, there are very few researches based on learners' perspective, let alone from the perspective of learners of Chinese who are native speakers of Shona. Therefore, to assist in reducing errors and to facilitate smooth learning of Chinese language grammar by native Shona speakers as well as minimising errors in the use of aspect particles, this research paper makes a comparative analysis of the aspect particle 过and 了. This research paper goes a further mile in establishing the close Shona equivalences of these two aspectual particles. An experiment with beginner level classes strengthens the findings of the investigation. This research paper mainly uses comparative research method so as to help learners draw examples from their mother tongue. The purpose of this paper is to describe the different use of these two aspectual particles 过and 了 in contrast with the Shona language.

**Keywords:** Aspectual Particles, 过guo 了le Native , Shona.

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### 1. Introduction

Chinese language is associated with a vast usage of particle words. Particle words are defined by Li & Thompson (1981) as those words that do not carry any lexical meaning in their own right but rather combined with other words, phrases or sentences to impart meaning. In Chinese, word forms do not necessarily change according to tense changes. Particle words often perform the function of expressing tense changes. Aspectual particles 了 and guo have always been a major difficulty encountered by learners of Chinese as a second language. In the teaching of Chinese as a second

<sup>1</sup> Chinese Language Lecturer, University of Zimbabwe Faculty of Arts. Email: [tawazeego@gmail.com](mailto:tawazeego@gmail.com).

<sup>2</sup> Chinese Language Lecturer, University of Zimbabwe Faculty of Arts. Email: [htsungy@gmail.com](mailto:htsungy@gmail.com)

language, the teaching of 了 and 过 has also been a major challenge (Mao Yunsha(2021). The researchers being Chinese lecturers at the University of Zimbabwe come to the realization that particle words especially aspectual particles are still a very big challenge to learners of Chinese as a second language at the University of Zimbabwe. Through various researches (Chao 1968; Li & Thompson; among others), it is generally accepted that aspectual particles play an important role in Mandarin Chinese. Paper after paper has always touched on the properties and functions of different aspectual particles. However it is also important to focus on the occurrence of Chinese aspectual particles from the angle of teaching and learning of Chinese as a second language. Many students at the University of Zimbabwe easily get confused when learning and using aspectual particles especially the particles 过 (guo) and 了 (le). The challenge in the use of these two aspectual particles emanates mainly from the fact that these particles do not have obvious equivalences in Shona or English. The central concern of this paper revolves around differentiating the functions of the aspectual particles 过 and 了 as well as establishing Shona equivalents to these particles. “了” and “过” are examples of Chinese language particle words that frequently appear in Chinese language. At the same time, these two particles are important learning points as well as difficulty point not only to Zimbabwean students but also to most learners of Chinese as a second language. Normally we use 了 to indicate “completion”, while we use 过 to express past experiences (Ai Bing 2020).

These two particles are confusing especially from the native Shona speakers' perspective partly because of the reasons mentioned above and largely because there seem to be less investigation into how these particles should be taught. Learners often confuse where to use the two, to an extent that they end up using 过 and 了 interchangeably, yet in fact, they are different, hence the need to compare and contrast 过 and 了 in order to also establish the closest equivalences of these particles in Shona. Literature survey plays an important role in this research and this is coupled with randomly selected sentences containing these two particle words. It is the analysis of the Shona translation of these randomly selected sentences that divulges a systematic order which in turn establishes the closest Shona equivalences of these two particle words. The equivalences established in this study make a huge contribution in the teaching and learning of Chinese language particle words specifically from the perspective of native Shona speakers. At the end the end this research conducts an experiment on two beginner to test whether its effective to teach aspectual particles using the established equivalences.

### 1.1 Aim

Based on the researchers' experience as Chinese teachers, it was observed that aspectual particles 过 and 了 are a huge challenge to the Shona learners of Chinese language. Learners are bound to make mistakes in writing and even translation if they do not have adequate knowledge of the different use of these two aspectual particles. Therefore, the present study aims to identify the sentence structures in which aspectual particles are used so as to explain how these particles are used. Also, the research will establish Shona equivalences in order to present references, this will make the teaching and learning of these particle words easier. In short, the purpose of this study is to enable the Shona learners of Chinese language to differentiate aspectual particles 了 and 过 and use them appropriately.

### 1.2 Justification of the study

Language is an important tool that facilitates human interaction. Such interaction is integral in diverse forms of human development, be it in social interaction, in economics or in education. Abou, S (1997) suggests that language pervade just about every facet of individual and social life, including economic processes. According to the government of Zimbabwe's Vision 2030, Zimbabwe is expected to be an upper middle-income economy by 2030. According to a 2018 publication released by the government titled “Towards a Prosperous & Empowered Upper Middle Income Society by 2030”, one of the prerequisites for the success of vision 2030 is economic engagement and reengagement. Zimbabwe needs to reengage with both domestic and foreign stakeholders if the agenda is to be a

success. China is one such a stakeholder which has stood with Zimbabwe through hard and good times. This kind of engagement calls for the need for the people's of two countries to understand each other, language plays this important role. The present paper therefore is a bridge towards creating mutual understanding through making it easy for people to acquire either Chinese or Zimbabwe's local language (Shona). Apart from foreign direct investment from China, China also remains a successful model of economic development for Zimbabwe. The key for all this to happen is communication. According to an official Chinese media publication, more than 20 000 Chinese people are investing in Zimbabwe, however communication is also still a challenge since most of them cannot speak English and most of the Zimbabwean people cannot speak Chinese. This is the reason why in 2007, the University of Zimbabwe through the Confucius institute started offering Chinese short term and degree programs to Zimbabweans so that they could bridge the communication gap between the two countries. Learning Chinese as well as researches around this aspect are therefore central in pushing and promoting the Zimbabwe's national vision.

Chinese language is totally different from Shona in terms of both pronunciation and grammar. Therefore, to make teaching and learning of Chinese easier there is need for a series of researches especially those that compare the two languages and come up with some effective teaching and learning strategies. The present study which compares 过 and 了 from the perspective of native Shona speakers is one of those researchers which aim to pave a way for smooth teaching and effective acquisition of Chinese in Zimbabwe. Aspect particles 过 and 了 are a challenge to most learners of Chinese as a second language. Hence, the present research gives a highlight of these particles from a Shona point of view thereby making the learning of aspect particles 过 and 了 by native Shona speakers easier.

## 2. Methodology

This research is much centered on literature survey. We have gathered a number of literatures pertaining the use of 过 and 了. To test the authenticity and degree of accuracy of this research, we randomly choose 20 Chinese sentences that involve the use of 过 as well as another 20 sentences involving the use of 了. These sentences were randomly selected from the internet. The analysis of these sentences especially if translated to Shona strengthens and gives more weight to the findings of this research. The Shona translation of all these sentences assisted the researchers to identify the common elements which have later been deemed as the Shona equivalences of these particle words. An experiment with two beginner classes is then used to assess the effectiveness of using the established equivalences to teach and learn the aspectual particles 过 and 了.

Randomly selected 过 sentences:

你学过中文吗？ Nǐ xué guo Zhōngwén ma? Have you ever studied Chinese?

你见过那个人吗？ Nǐ jiàn guo nàge rén ma? Have you seen that person before?

我们来过这个地方 Wǒmen lái guo zhège dìfāng. We've been to this place before.

我也吃过日本菜。 Wǒ yě chī guo Riběn cài. I've also eaten Japanese food before.

你看过这个电影吗？ Nǐ kàn guo zhège diànyǐng ma? Have you?

我去过加拿大。 Wǒ qù guo Jiā'nádà. I've been to Canada (before).

我已经看过那部电影。 Wǒ yǐjīng kànguò nà bù diànyǐng. I've already seen that film.

你见过他吗？ Nǐ jiànguò tā ma? Have you seen him before?

他已经吃过这种菜。 Tā yǐjīng chī guo zhè zhòng cài. He once ate this kind of dish before.

我已经听说过那件事情了。 wǒ yǐjīng tīngshuō guo nà jiàn shìqing le, I (have) already heard (about) that "jian" (of) thing.

我以前来过这个地方。wǒ yǐqián lái guo zhè ge dìfang. I (have) (in the) past once come to this place.

我常常想起来她说过的话。Wǒ chángcháng xiǎngqǐ lái tā shuōguo de huà. I often recall what she has said

我骂过我的儿子。Wǒ màguo wǒ de érzi, I've scolded my son before.

他去过中国。tā qù guò zhōng guó He has been. to China.

我学过日语。wǒ xué guò rì yǔ .I have learned Japanese. (I have experiences in learning Japanese.)

我读过这本书。wǒ dú guò zhè běn shū .I have read this book.

你听过王菲的歌吗？nǐ tīng guò wáng fēi de gē ma? Have you ever listened to Faye WONG's song(s)?

我摔断过腿。wǒ shuāi duàn guò tuǐ . I once broke my leg

老师说过汉语。lǎo shī shuō guò hàn yǔ . The teacher once spoke Chinese.

家里来过客人。jiā lǐ lái guò kè rén. We had guests at home.

The above randomly selected twenty sentences were carefully analyzed from the context of native Shona speakers in terms of how they occur if translated from Chinese to Shona. It is important to note that the above sentences were used only for 过。In order to grasp the occurrence of the aspect particle 了 in Shona, the following sentences were used as reference point;

我吃了三碗饭。wǒ chī le sān wǎn fàn。 I have eaten three bowls of rice.

你到了办公室，就给我打电话。nǐ dào le bàngōngshì, jiù géi wǒ dǎ diàn huà。 Call me as soon as you've arrived in your office.

他洗了澡，就去睡觉。tā xǐ le zǎo, jì qù shuì jiào。 He finished taking his bath, and then went to bed. (He went to bed as soon as he finished taking his bath.)

上星期只晴了一天。shàng xīng qī zhǐ qíng le yī tiān. The sky only cleared for a day last week

我听了很高兴。wǒ tīng le hěn gāo xìng. I was happy to hear it.

我买了一本书。wǒ mǎi le yī běn shū. I bought a book.

放了假就回家。fàng le jià jiù huí jiā. I will go home as soon as we close

他的身体胖了一些。fàng le jià jiù huí jiā. He has grown fat

我吃了中国菜。wǒ chī le zhōng guó cài . I ate Chinese food.

我玩儿游戏，玩儿了一年。wǒ wán ér yóu xì, wán ér le yī nián. I have played games for a year now.

我吃饭吃了一个小时。wǒ chī fàn chī le yī gè xiǎo shí .I have eaten for an hour

你都睡了一天，还不起床吗？nǐ dōu shuì le yī tiān, hái bù qǐ chuáng ma? You have slept for a day, why don't you wake up.

你吃了吗？nǐ chī le ma? Have you eaten?

我刚刚吃了中国菜。wǒ gāng gāng chī le zhōng guó cài. I have just eaten

他死了很久。tā sǐ le hěn jiǔ . He died long back

今天上午我去了超市。jīn tiān shàng wǔ wǒ qù le chāo shì .I went to the shops this midmorning

小王买了一本书。xiǎo wáng mǎi le yī běn shū. Mrs Wang bought a book

我收到了他的一封信。wǒ shōu dào le tā de yī fēng xìn. I received his letter.

你花了多少钱？nǐ huā le duō shǎo qián? How much have you spent?

他找了不少解决问题的方法。tā zhǎo le bù shǎo jiě wèn tí de fāng fǎ. He looked for many ways to solve the problem.

评委们听了都很感动。lǎo shī zài zhǐ shàng xiě le yī jù huà 。The judges listened and got touched.

老师在纸上写了一句话。lǎo shī zài zhǐ shàng xiě le yī jù huà 。The teacher wrote a sentence on a paper

电台增加了两个节目。diàn tái zēng jiā le liǎng gè jié mù。The radio station added two programs.

### 3. Chinese aspectual particles and their functions

For the past few decades aspectual particles and aspect marking has received a great many attention from researchers internationally and especially in Chinese linguistics. This might probably be because aspect particles are the only kind of morphology like devices in Chinese language. Grammatical aspects occur differently in different languages, for instance, inflectional morphology, auxiliaries or periphrastic constructions (Luying Wang, 2012). According to Li & Shirai (2000), in the recent years, aspect has become increasingly interesting to researchers in the field of language acquisition. In Chinese language, there is no inflectional morphology to indicate case, gender, number or tense (Wolfgang 2014). Therefore, the notion aspectual particles in Chinese language is not only a challenge to Chinese learners at the University of Zimbabwe, but also an important category of the Chinese language grammar.

In a standard Chinese language sentence, 了 and 过 are normally placed after a verb. Although numerous studies (Li & Dejin(2008), Zhao Dong (2011), Zhao Xiaotong (2014), , Wang Qingyun (2013), Gao Rui(2006) , Li Ping (1988), Li Yafei (1995)etc) have already been devoted to the study of 了 and 过 · however the precise function of each of them is still a cause of disagreement among various researchers. There is a general consensus though that these markers do not in any way relate the situation described by the sentence to the time of utterance but rather presents various perspectives in the situation. In essence, 了 and 过 both express aspect rather than tense relations and are often called aspect particles or markers (Li & Thompson 1891). 了 and 过 both express a perfective aspect.

### 4. Aspectual Particles 过 and 了

In Mandarin, the perfective aspectual particles are realized by post verbal morphemes 了 and 过. These two aspect particles are all derived and grammaticalized from verbs. The aspectual particle 了 is derived from the full verb (liao), which means “to finish” in classical Chinese. 了 functions as an aspect marker when it is added after an action verb. However when suffixed to a stative verb or a free standing adjective, 了 denotes change (Smith, 1994). As an aspect particle, 了 directly follows the verb; it expresses a sense of completion, within the context of the sentence; it is not used/ required in negative sentences (e.g. negative replies to questions with le); it is usually followed by a specific object (eg. something quantified, or not too general).

The full verb which means “to pass” or “to cross and the aspect particle 过 still co-exist in modern Chinese (Parkard, 2000). The aspect particle 过 is normally used as an aspectual marker that refers to the situation expressed by the verb as having been experienced at least once at some definite time and usually in the past. The main emphasis is not on the fact that the event has occurred, but rather that it has taken place at least once in the past. In a situation in which the emphasis is simply on the event or a series of events having occurred, we should use the perfective 了 not 过. According to (Smith, 1994) perfective morpheme 了, presents closed, non-stative situation and so does the marker 过. However, in contrast with aspect particles 了, 过 expresses a kind of discontinuity. In addition, 过 signals that an event has been experienced at least once at some indefinite time (Li & Thompson, 1981). To illustrate this difference further, Chao (1968) used the following examples to contrast the functions of 了 and 过. a) I broke my leg (and it is still broken)

b) I once broke my leg (and its fine now)



In sentence (a) above 了 means the event occurred in the past and has an effect into the present. However in sentence (b), the use of 过 indicates that the situation doesn't exist anymore at the time of speaking. Therefore, we can conclude that 了 hints at a result of the event, while 过 indicates the completion and discontinuity of the event. In their research Hendriks and Li(2000) followed an approach that is a bit different to analyze these aspectual particles. In their analysis they took aspectual particles as sentence operators that add a particular meaning component to the underlying sentence. According to this account 了 and 过 's major function is generally to relate the sentence in one way or the other to the time.

## 5. Aspectual Particles In Shona

It is crucial at this stage to distinguish between tense and aspect markers. According to Bubenik (1999:116) both tenses and aspectual particles are concerned with time but in different ways and forms. "Whereas tense is a deictic category which relates the time of the action (or event state) to time of utterance which is 'now' aspect is concerned with representing different positions of the subject within event time." According to Katamba (1993:221), aspect indicates whether an event, state, process or action that is denoted by the verb is completed or in progress. He goes on to make a distinction between complete and incomplete aspect. The aspectual particle that is used for incomplete action is called imperfective (progressive or habitual) and that which indicates completed actions is called perfective aspect. The following are some of the aspect formatives that are found in Shona, with examples:

1. -no- present habitual  
ndinoshanda pachikoro ndi-no-shand-a pachikoro "I work at school"
- 2.-ai- past habitual e.g.  
(51) ndaishanda pachikoro nd-ai-shand-a pachikoro "I used to work at school"
3. -chi- present progressive  
achiri kufamba a-chi-ri ku-famb-a  
"He/she is still walking"
- 4.-ch i- inceptive (indicating the beginning of an action or process)  
ngatichienda nga-ti-chi-end-a "Let us (start) to go now"
- 5.chi- frequentative  
ndinochienda ndi-no-chi-dy-a "I often eat"

Although an attempt has been made by various scholars to divide the notional domains tense, aspect and mood markers into distinct subcategories, it should also be pointed out that they are related in a systematic way. According to Heine (1993:69), they are interrelated as patterns of development which can be described with reference to a grammaticalization scale

### 7. Occurrence of 了 and 过 in Shona

It is important to note that both Shona and Chinese language has a vast use of aspect makers. However, the occurrence of these markers or particles is different when translated into either of the languages. The main motive behind this paper is to deal with the confusion normally encountered with Shona L1 speakers in as far as aspects 过 and 了 are concerned. Therefore this research emanates from the angle of native Shona speakers and translate these aspect particles into their closest Shona equivalences. For instance:

我 帅 断 了 腿  
wǒ shuài duàn le tuǐ

- a. I broke my leg (and it is still broken)

The above sentence can be translated into Shona as "Ndatyoka gumbo" or "Ndakatyoka gumbo". These two sentences are both emphasizing on the action of the bones being broken. In this case, the status stays the same. This means that the occurrence of the action has some effect into the present. From the above example, we can see that the morpheme -aka- can best perform the function of the aspectual particle 了. The following are typical examples of 了 sentences and how the meaning can perfectly be translated into Shona using the marker -aka-:

Chinese	Shona
哥哥结婚了	Mukoma v-aka-roora.
家里来了客人	Kumba kw-aka-uya vaenzi.
老师去了中国	Mudzidzisi –aka-enda ku China.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that Chinese language aspect particle 了 is equivalent to the Shona language remote past marker –aka-. In all the examples given above, one thing in common is the fact that the event or action started or happened in the past (Yesterday going back) but still have an influence into the present. It is also important to note that when the aspect 了 is used after actions that happened in the recent past (today), the equivalent Shona marker is –a- as shown in the table below:

Chinese	Shona
哥哥结婚了	Mukoma v-a-roora
家里来了客人	Kumba kw-a-uya vaenzi.
老师去了中国	Mudzidzisi v-a-enda ku China,

In general, the aspect particle 了 is directly equivalent to both the remote past marker –aka- and the recent past marker –a-. This is the reason why L1 Shona speakers mistakenly conflate the aspect particle “了” with past tense. The confusion emanates from the fact that in Shona language, the morphemes –a- and –aka- are used to mark tenses in some contexts and aspect in some other cases.

b. <sup>wǒ shuāi duàn guò tuǐ</sup> 我摔断过腿。

The above sentence can be translated as “I once broke my leg (and its fine now)”. In this case 过 is emphasizing on the fact that the action or event once happened and ended in the past. 过 denotes past experiences. 过 indicates the complete aspect of the verb. 过 is normally used when speaking of actions in which the subject doesn't regularly do or actions that happened in the distant past. The sentence in (b) above represents the action (breaking the leg) as an experience that happened at least once in the past. Important to note is the fact that it happened in the past and ended in the past. The leg broke and recovered in the past. In Shona, the above statement can be read as “ndakambo tyoka gumbo”. The morpheme –akambo- indicates that we are talking of past experiences and thus directly equivalent to the Chinese aspect particle 过. For instance:

Chinese	Shona
我听说过这个事情	Nd-akambo-nzwa nezve nyaya iyi.
家里来过客人。	Kumba kw-akambo- uya vayenzi.
老师去过中国	Mudzidzisi v-akambo-enda ku China.

For recent past experiences and actions relating to recent past, that is having occurred the same day, then the bound morpheme –ambo- as shown in the table below is used:

Chinese	Shona
我听说过这个事情	Nd-ambo-nzwa nezve nyaya iyi.
家里来过客人	Kumba kw-ambo-uya vaenzi
老师说过汉语	Mudzidzisi ambotaura Chichaina

The above analysis makes it clear that the aspect particle 过 is directly equivalent to the Shona aspect markers –ambo- and –akambo-. Therefore the aspect particles 过 and 了 have clearly been translated into their Shona equivalences as concluded in the diagram below:

	过	了
Recent Past	-ambo- Baba vambouya	-a- Baba vauya
Remote Past	-akambo- Baba vakambouya	-aka- Baba vakauya
Meaning	It started and ended in the past	Started in the past but affecting the present

The research results in the table above have been tested on the sentences in the methodology section, that have been randomly selected. This strengthens the findings of this investigation since all the randomly selected sentences with the aspectual particle 过 and 了 have been proven to have either of the above prefixes when translated into Shona language as shown in the analysis below:

Chinese carrying 了 and their translations

Chinese Sentences	Shona Sentences
wǒ chī le sānwǎn fàn。 nǐ dào le bàngōngshì, jù géiwǒ dǎdiànhuà。 tā xǐ le zǎo, jù qù shuǐjiào。 shàng xīng qī zhī qíng le yī tiān。	Ndadya ndiro nhatu dzechikafu Wasvika kuoffice wondifonera  Ageza ndokuenda kunovata Svondo rapera kwakangochena zuva rimwe. Ndakateerera ndikafara Ndakatenga bhuku rimwechete Tavhara toenda kumba Ndadya chikafu chemachaina Ndakatamba ma game kwegore Ndadya kwe awa rinwechete Warara muswere wese, haumuke here?
wǒ tīng le hěn gāo xìng。 wǒ mǎi le yī běn shū。 fàng le jià jù huí jiā。 wǒ chī le zhōng guó cài 。 wǒ wán r yóu xì, wán r le yī nián。 wǒ chī fàn chī le yī gè xiǎo shí 。 nǐ dōu shuì le yī tiān , hái bù qǐ chuáng ma ? nǐ chī le ma ? wǒ gāng gāng chī le zhōng guó cài。 tā sǐ le hěn jiǔ 。 jīn tiān shàng wǔ wǒ qù le chāo shì 。 xiǎo wáng mǎi le yī běn shū。 wǒ shōu dào le tā de yī fēng xìn。 nǐ huā le duō shǎo qián? tā zhǎo le bù shǎo jiě jué wèn tí de fāng fǎ。	Makadya here?  Ndadya Chinesee food manje manje Akafa kare kare Nhasi mangwanani ndaenda kuchitoro Wang akatenga bhuku Ndakatambira tsamba yake Washandisa marii? Akatsvaka nzira zhinji kugadzirisa dambudziko Mudzidzisi vakanyora mutsara pa bepa. Radio yakawedzera zvirongwa zviriviri.
lǎo shī zài zhǐ shàng xiě le yī jù huà 。 diàn tái zēng jiā le liǎng gè jié mù。	

All the 了 sentences above have conformed to the framework laid by the findings of this study that when translated into Shona, 了 becomes -a- or aka. This is enough proof for the reliability of this study and its findings. The following table shows the occurrence of 过 sentences when translated into Shona.

汉语句子	绍纳语句子
Nǐ xué guo Zhōngwén ma? Nǐ jiàn guo nàge rén ma? Wǒmen lái guo zhège dìfang. Wǒ yě chī guo Riběn cài. Nǐ kàn guo zhège diànyǐng ma? Wǒ qùguo Jiā'nádà. Wǒ yǐjīng kànguò nà bù diànyǐng. Nǐ jiànguò tā ma? Tā yǐjīng chīguò zhè zhòng cài. wǒ yǐjīng tīngshuō guo nà jiàn shìqing le. wǒ yǐqián lái guo zhè ge dìfang. Wǒ chángcháng xiàngqǐlái tā shuōguo de huà。 Wǒ màguo wǒde érzi, tā qù guo zhōng guó wǒ xué guo rì yǔ 。 wǒ dú guo zhè běn shū 。	Wakambo dzidza Chinese here? Wamboona munhu uye here Tambouya panzvimbo ino. Ndakambodyawo chikafu cheku Japani  Wakamboona firimu iri here? Ndakamboenda ku kanadha. Ndamboona firimu iri Wambomuona here?  Akambodya mhando yechikafu ichi Nyaya iyi ndakamboinzwa. Ndambouya pano  Ndinowanzo rangarira zvaakambotaura.



nǐ tīng guò wáng fēi de gē ma ? wǒ shuāi duàn guò tuǐ . lǎo shī shuō guò hàn yǔ . jiā lǐ lái guò kè rén.	Ndakambotuka mwanakomana wangu Akamboenda ku Chiina Ndakambodzidza chiJapani Ndamboveerenga bhuku iri Wakambonzwa nziyo dza wangfei here? Ndakambo tyoka gumbo. Mudzidzisi akambotaura Chinese Kumba kwambouya vaenzi.
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The table above has proven that the Shona equivalence of 过 is -ambo- and -akambo- depending on whether its remote past or recent past. All the randomly selected sentences expressed a uniform trend upon being translated into Shona. The trend tallied with all the findings of this investigation.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this present study is not to give an exhaustive account of the functions of aspectual particles 过 and 了. Instead, we attempt to give a simple but precise picture of how these particles would occur in the context of Shona language and from the perspective of native Shona speakers.

Aspectual particles are an important part of Chinese grammar content which runs through from elementary proficiency to advanced proficiency. These grammar points are important to learners at all levels. In this study, we outlined the use of the aspect particles 过 and 了. A comparison of these two somehow confusing aspect particles was also given. It was found out that both 了 and 过 come right after the verb and they give the impression that that something has occurred. However, emphasis was given on the fact that 过 is used for experiences and for actions that started and ended in the past. On the other hand, 了 is placed after a verb, and indicates the completion of an action. A detailed outline of the occurrence of these aspect particles in Shona language were given. It was concluded that the aspect particle 过 is equivalent to the Shona aspect and tense markers -ambo- and -akambo-. On the contrary, the aspect particle 了 is directly equivalent to the Shona markers -a- and -aka-. These findings have been tested on randomly selected sentences and a similar trend that tallies with the findings have been observed. The analysis given in this study makes the teaching and learning of Chinese language easier when teaching aspect particles 过 and 了.

The findings of this investigation have been applied in teaching two different beginner classes. In this experiment, the first group of learners was taught without mentioning the shona equivalences of 过 and 了. The second group was taught mentioning the equivalences. The second group mastered the concept easily and in the shortest time as compared to the first group. The second group mastered these particles easily because they have been explained from their mother tongue perspective. This proves that the establishing of Shona equivalences of 过 and 了 makes it easier for the teacher to explain the concepts, it also makes it easier for students to grasp the meaning and use of these particle words, hence the importance of this study from the perspective of native Shona speakers.

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