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**1.1 What are Chinese characters? 什么是汉字?**

A Chinese character is an individual written unit separated by a space boundary, with each character corresponding to one oral syllable. Most of Chinese morphemes are monosyllabic. Each morpheme is represented by a character in written form. Each Chinese character also represents one syllable. Therefore, there exists a general one-to-one correspondence between morphemes and Chinese characters (施春宏, 2018). Unlike the case in English where most morphemes are bound morphemes in words, most of Chinese characters are free morphemes. They can stand alone to be a word. Only a very small number of characters lacking independent meanings are required to combine with other characters to form two-syllable morphemes such as 蟋蟀 (*xìshuài*) *cricket*. Characters are constructed by individual strokes. In general, there are seven basic strokes. The different combinations of the seven basic strokes yield another 24 types of strokes (张静贤, 1992: 31-32). These 31 types of strokes are used to create about 50,000 Chinese characters, of which only