

2. The Structure of Chinese Characters

2.1 Radicals

Chinese characters can be read as more than a simple combination of strokes. Certain larger constituents can be characters in their own right. There are a little over two hundred of these radicals, and they provide a means by which the characters can be grouped. This is what Chinese dictionaries do. The radicals give a clue to the meaning of a character. They may occupy any part of the character.

Exercises

1. Find the radical 力 (li = strength, power) in these characters.

动

dong = movement

功夫

gongfu

劲

jin = jin-power

2. 口 (kou) is the character for mouth.

A) Find this radical in the characters below .

B) Draw the remainder of each character.

(Vertical strokes from top to bottom, horizontals from left to right)

叫

jiao = to call, to be called

吃

chi = to eat

可

ke = to be able to

吸

xi = to inhale

合

he = to close

喂

wei = hello

嗓

sang = neck

味

wei = taste