

Reading and Writing email in Chinese

First of all, make sure your computer is enabled for displaying Chinese. See other documents on "Setting Up Chinese IME (Input Method Environment) in Windows" for details.

READING EMAIL - (1) WITH MICROSOFT OUTLOOK

Normally, text type (encoding) is auto-detected upon opening. For various reasons, detection may fail. Shown below is an incoming email with a few embedded Chinese words, 朱自清, 背影. It displays garbled text.

1. The first step is to go to **View->Encoding** to manually correct the encoding. In Figure 1, those Chinese characters redisplayed properly by setting the encoding to "Chinese Traditional (Big5)"

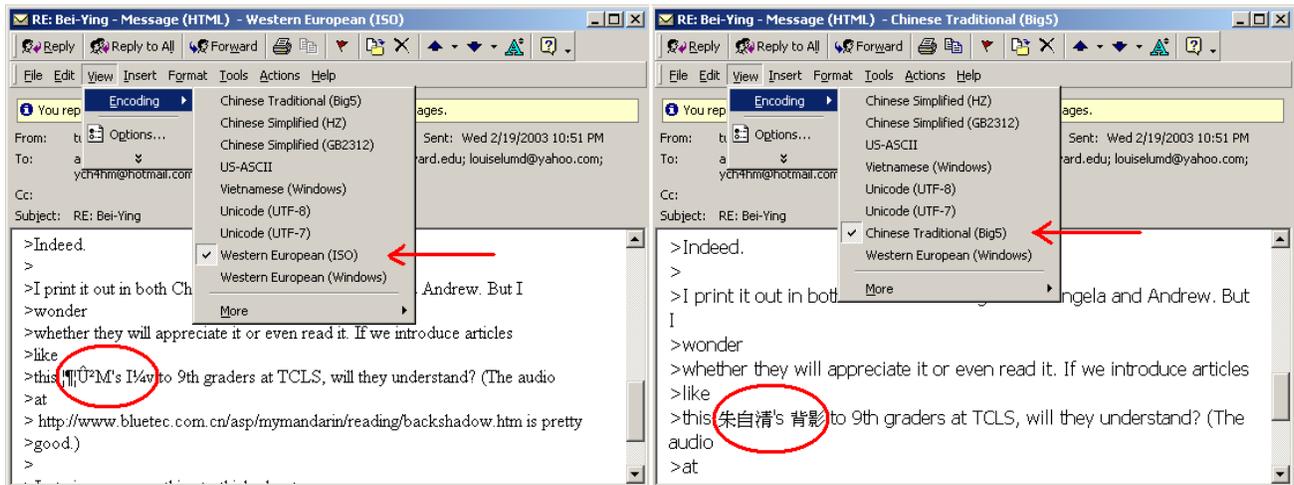


Figure 1

2. If this simple setting doesn't work, try the following steps based on how these characters are displayed:
 - a. "?????": This email was never encoded properly by the sender. These characters have no meanings any more. Contact the sender and ask for a resend after proper encoding. Beware that the sender should not resend the copy in his "Sent Mail" box since that copy has also been filtered without encoding. The sender may have to retype the email for you.
 - b. "0\$nl%L(#C\$F7m": This is caused by **mismatched encoding**. Go to **View->Encoding** and try **GB** or **UTF-8** (a commonly used encoding from WEB-based mailtool) and other encodings.
 - c. "秋 天 " or "□□□□" (Figure 2): these are "web/HTML" codes. Highly likely the sender is using a web-base mailtool but those UTF-* encoded characters were sent as plain US-ASCII texts "literally". Use NJstar Communicator to view. Or save it as text, and then add "<html>" in the beginning of the first line and resave it as XXX.html. Then you can double-click it to view with your browser. Keep in mind that these characters cannot be copied/pasted for reuse elsewhere. (see next page)

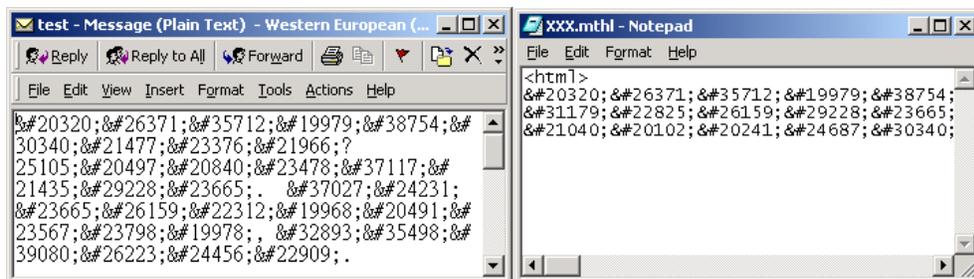


Figure 2

- d. "0\$nl%L(#C\$F7m": If nothing works, these text strings may have been "damaged" by auto line wrap of sender's/reader's mailtool where linefeed characters have been inserted in between; or may contain mixed encoding (combined copy/paste from various sources); or

READING EMAIL - (2) DIFFICULTIES WITH UTF-8 ENCODED CHARACTERS

UTF-8 Characters are convenient for viewing with HTML browsers. However, these UTF-8 encoded characters may display properly but you have difficulties in copying/pasting them to other applications (Figure 3). You can either (1) in WORD, highlight these text and set paragraph type to HTML to view them or (2) use [南極星 NJStar Chinese Word Processor \(v4.35\)](#) as the intermediate converter from **HZ for Internet** Email to **BIG5** (Figure 4) to fix them.

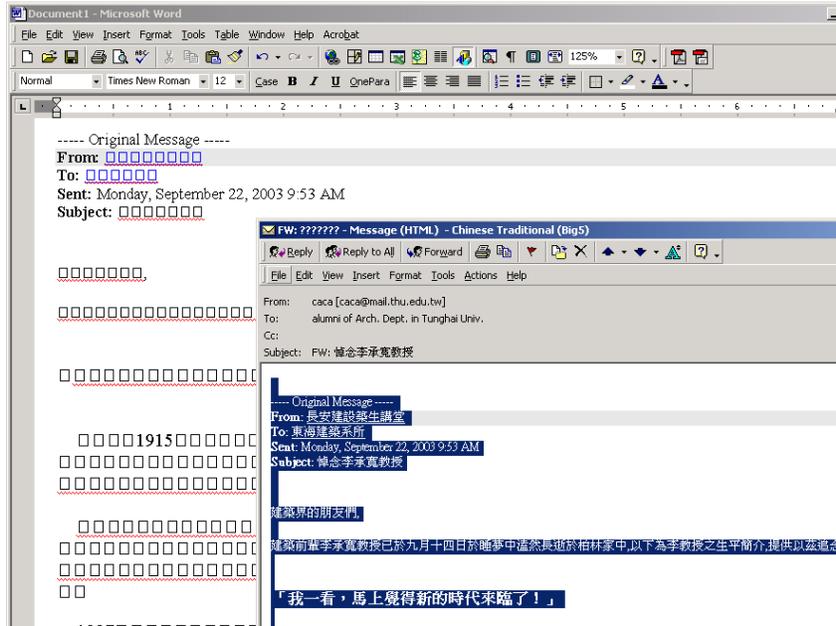


Figure 3

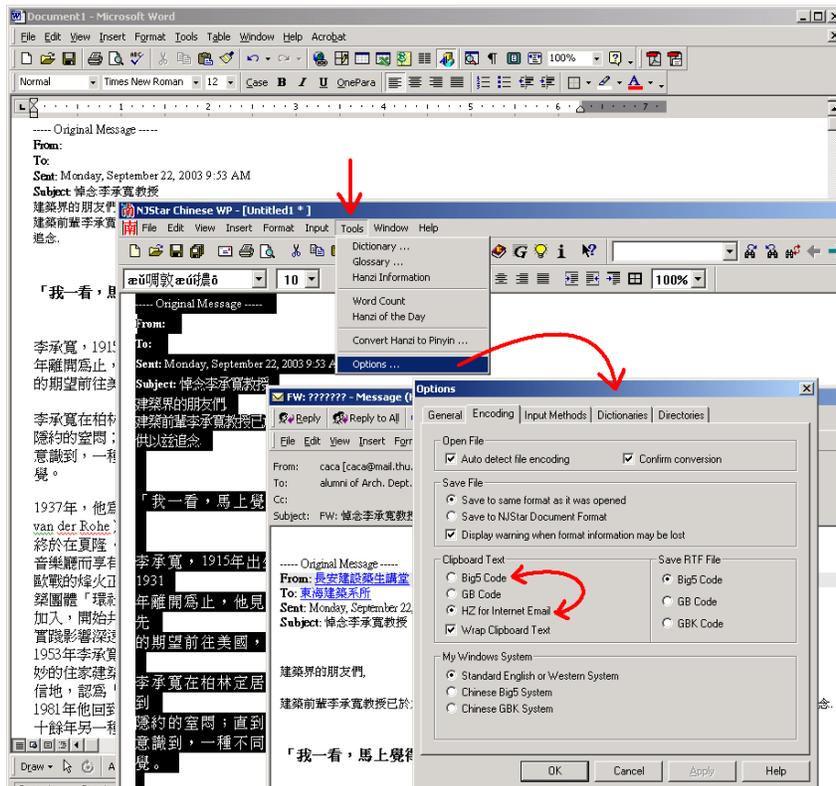


Figure 4

READING EMAIL - (3) WITH INTERNET BROWSER (WEB-BASED)

Read email from www.hotmail.com or www.yahoo.com using Internet Explorer, go to **View->Encoding** (or right-click any where within the email body) and set it to **Chinese Traditional (Big5)** or **UTF-8** (Figure 5, 6). Otherwise, apply similar steps as mentioned in page 1.

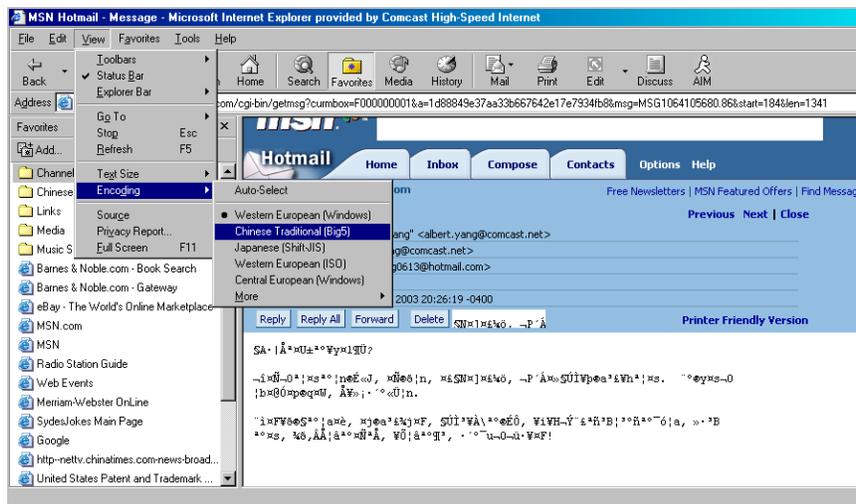


Figure 5

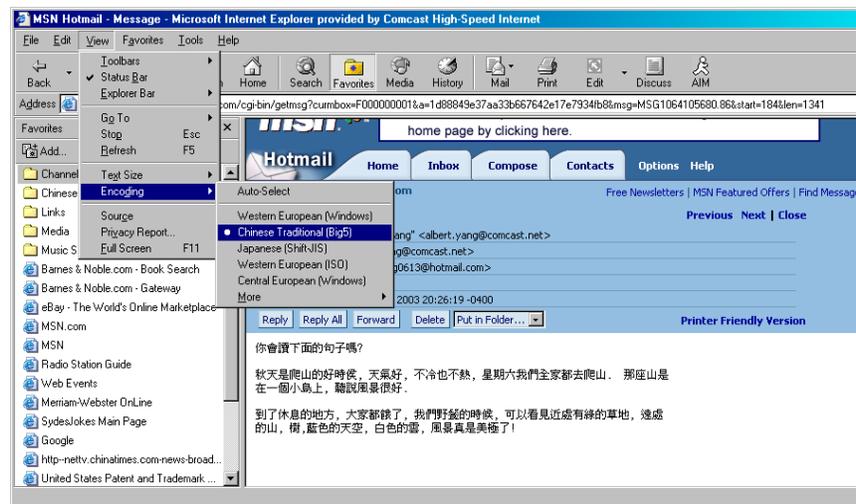


Figure 6

If you are using **Mozilla browser on linux**, go to **View->Character Coding->More->East Asian** and set it to **Chinese Traditional (Big5)** or **UTF-8**.

WRITING EMAIL - (1) GENERAL RULES

1. **Keep in mind that it is the sender's responsibility to create a properly encoded email for recipients.** Seeing them displayed properly while writing your email does not mean that your email will be sent properly.
 - (1) Understand the importance of proper encoding, and make sure it's either **BIG5** or **UTF-8**.
 - (2) Select **"Copy Message to Sender Folder"** so you can verify it if your recipients cannot read your message in Chinese.
 - (3) If you can't solve the problem, **use attachments**. Write Chinese as a separate text document (.DOC or .RTF) and send it as an attachment.
 - (4) If recipients still couldn't read your attachment, make it a raster image file (.GIF or JPG) and send it as a "picture" attachment.

WRITING EMAIL - (2) WITH MICROSOFT OUTLOOK

1. If your computer has been setup properly for Chinese language support, just turn on your desired Chinese IME and type directly into the body of your email.

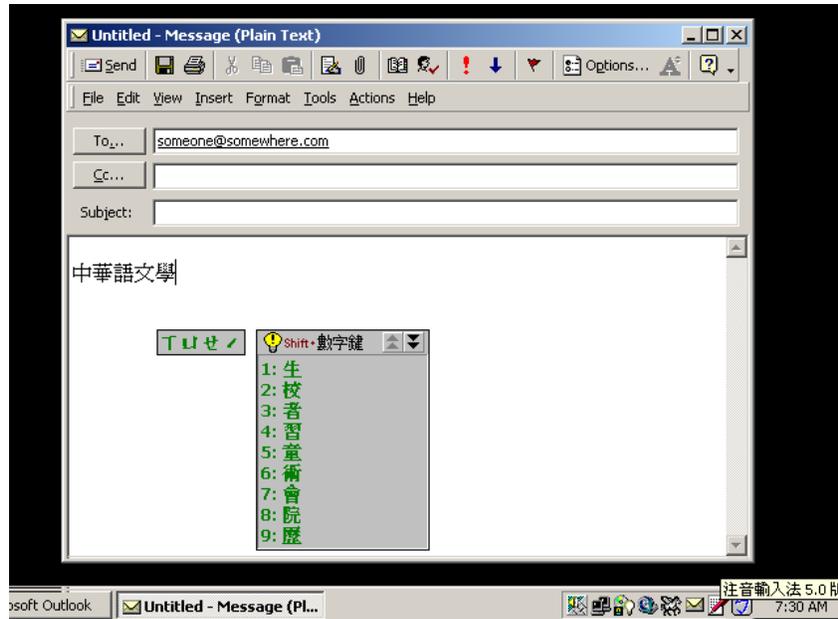


Figure 7

2. If your email software does not support foreign IME, you can type the body of your email in 南極星 NJStar Chinese Word Processor (v4.35) and copy/paste over.
3. This is the last and the most important step: Go to **Format->Encoding** and set it to **Chinese Traditional (BIG5)** or **UTF-8 before sending it out**. You can set your default encoding for all outgoing mail in you Outlook by going to Tools->Options->Mail Format->International Options if so desired.

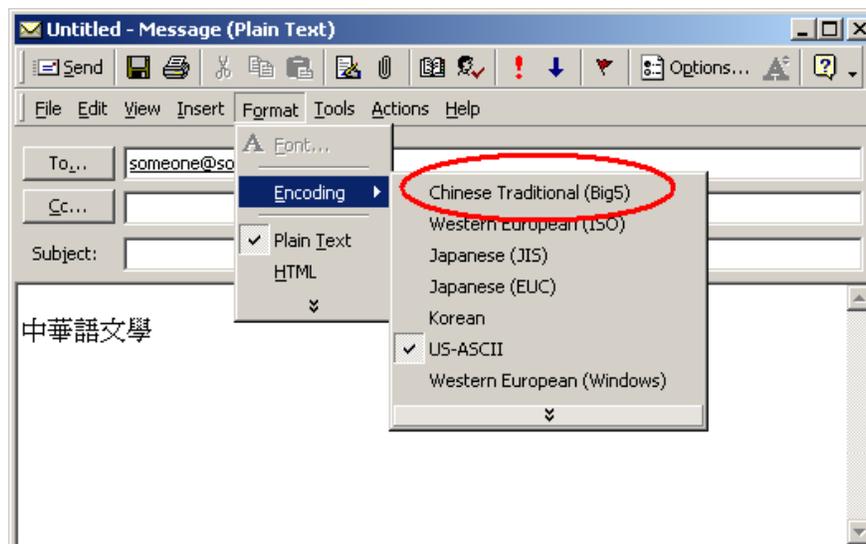


Figure 8

4. If you are using Microsoft Office XP, the GUI (graphics User Interface) for View and Format menu settings in Microsoft Outlook is different from illustrated above. It "reveals" more formatting information. See Figure 9 below.

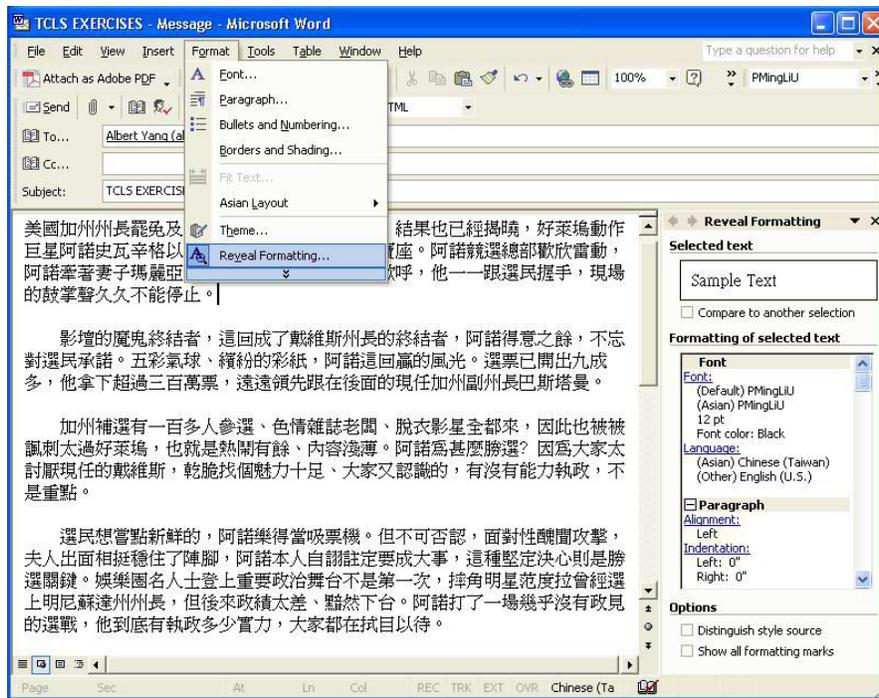


Figure 9

WRITING EMAIL - (3) WITH INTERNET BROWSER (WEB-BASED)

Using web-based mailtools such as www.hotmail.com or www.yahoo.com; you must go to **View->Encoding** and set **Chinese Traditional (BIG5)** or **UTF-8** **prior to composing your email**. Otherwise, what you send out will not be exactly as what you typed. Select **"Copy Message to Sender Folder"** so you can verify it.

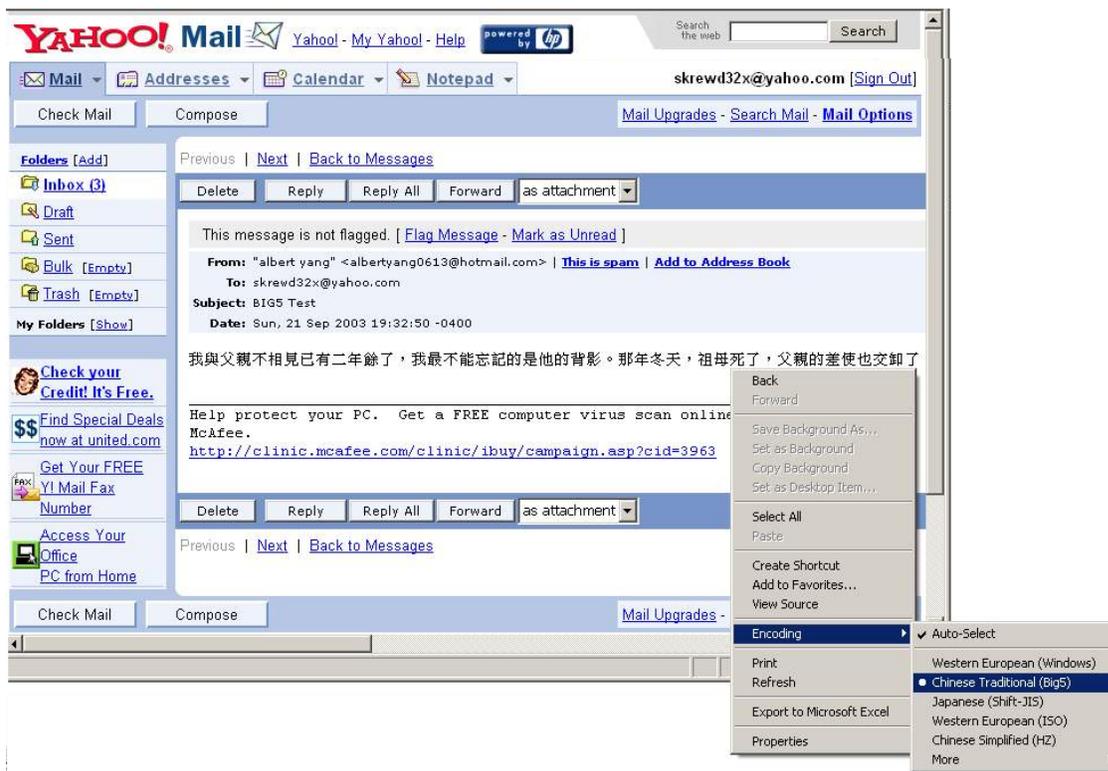
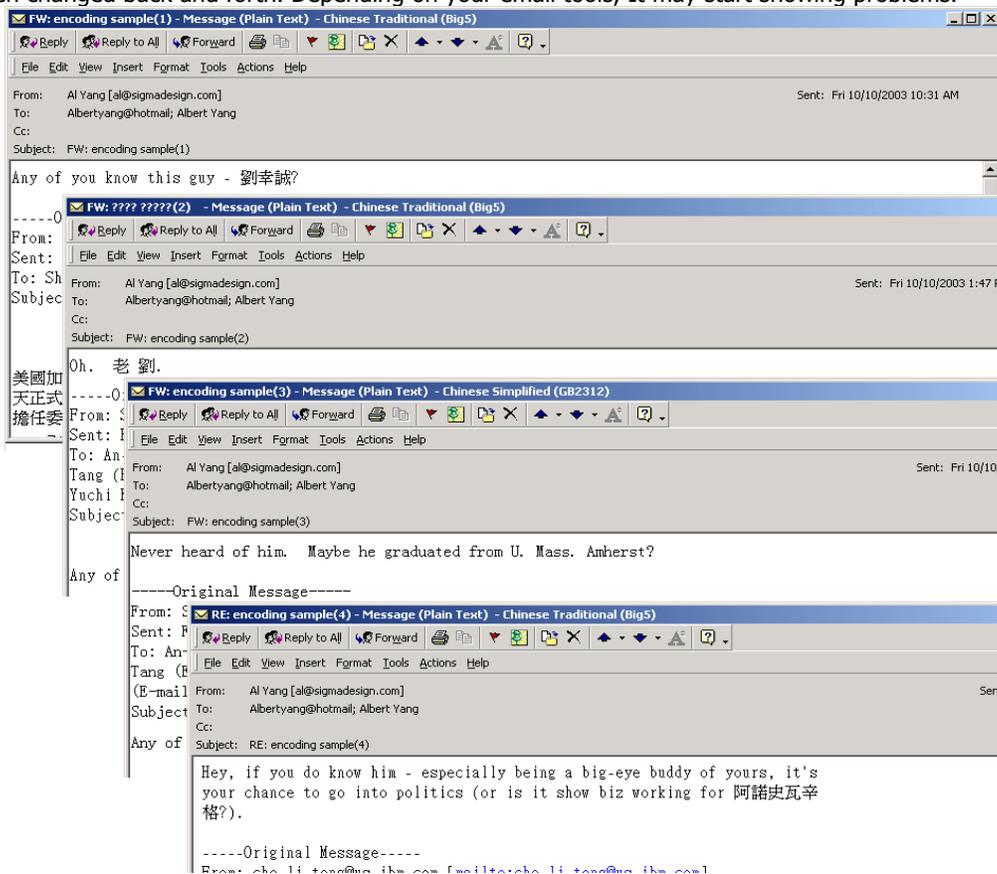


Figure 10

WRITING EMAIL - (4) Reply with original email included

1. It is very common that you reply to sender (or to all) with the original email included below. You may be aware that your "default" encoding may be different from the original sender's. This creates an email body that contains multiple encoding markers. In the following sequence of email illustration, you can see encodings have been changed back and forth. Depending on your email tools, It may start showing problems.



WRITING EMAIL - (5) RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **EMBED CHINESE CHARACTERS:** Using foreign (non-ascii English) characters in email addresses and in the subject line are allowed but should be discouraged, particularly for email between foreign countries. It introduces non-local display in your email software and may mess up your operating environment.
2. **KEEP IT SIMPLE:** Simple format and standard font minimizes the risk of having encoding mismatches. Therefore, make sure the encoding is "**BIG5**" and "**Format->Plain Text**"; or "**UTF-8**" if you need HTML/WEB layout. Use "**MingLiU**" font if you're given a font choice.
3. **USE THE RIGHT FORMAT FOR ATTACHMENTS:** **.RTF** is the simplest text format since it maintains the integrity of Chinese characters and can be opened by almost all editors. With the popularity of Microsoft Office today, use Word **.DOC** and other office documents when complicated charts or image are embedded. For images, use compressed format such as **.Gif** (256-color format) or **.JPG** (true-color photos).

Notes:

- a. This document is prepared for the environment using 中文繁體字 (BIG5). Steps for 簡體字 (GB) are similar.
- b. In addition to offering computer course to our students, TCLS gives seminars such as "How to set up Chinese IME (Input Method Environment) in Microsoft Windows", from time to time, to our parents and the community. Visit www.TheChineseLanguageSchool.org for schedule and details.
- c. The software, 南極星 NJStar Chinese Word Processor (v4.35), which has been mentioned several times in this document can be downloaded (free demo) from or purchased at www.njstar.com.