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Developing a Preliminary Codebook for Simplified English Practices in Tourism Service Encounters: An Archival and Secondary-Data Study

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Abstract

This study develops a preliminary, source-sensitive codebook for analysing simplified English practices in tourism service encounters in Ho Chi Minh City. It reanalyses archival material from an earlier field study together with a separate set of published hotel currency-exchange extracts. The analytical corpus comprises 32 source-linked evidence records: 17 observational excerpts, six report-level interview units, and nine secondary validation extracts. The codebook covers three domains: linguistic-form practices, interactional and pragmatic practices, and reported perceptions and limitations. Each code is operationally defined and linked to identifiable evidence. The reanalysis shows recurring formal simplification in the archival excerpts, particularly copula omission, simplified negation, and non-reference word order. The interactional data indicate that reduced linguistic forms did not necessarily lead to communication breakdown. Contextual support, repetition, clarification, and reformulation helped participants maintain or restore service-task progression. The surviving interview evidence presents mixed evaluations, including perceived usefulness and reduced effort as well as difficulty, irritation, misunderstanding, and reluctance to make social judgments. These findings do not establish the prevalence of particular forms or support classifying the observed practices as a stable pidgin. Instead, the study demonstrates how incomplete historical material can be organised transparently through a codebook that distinguishes what the available sources can support from claims that require fuller prospective data.

Keywords: *simplified English practices; tourism service encounters; archival reanalysis; qualitative codebook; interactional practices; English as a lingua franca; Ho Chi Minh City*

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1. Introduction

International tourism brings speakers from different linguistic backgrounds into frequent, short service encounters in hotels, restaurants, shops, transport facilities, and information centres. English often provides the shared communicative resource in such encounters, even when neither participant uses it as a first language. Research on English as a lingua franca (ELF) has shown that successful communication in these settings cannot be judged solely against native-speaker grammatical norms; speakers also rely on interactional adjustment, contextual knowledge, and shared orientation to the task at hand (Firth, 1996; Seidlhofer, 2011). In hospitality specifically, communication between front-line staff and international guests has

long been recognised as a distinct professional language practice shaped by the stages and purposes of the service encounter (Blue & Harun, 2003).

In Vietnamese tourism specifically, an earlier field study by (Bui, 2013) recorded English-mediated service exchanges at a diner and a convenience store in Ho Chi Minh City, documented the linguistic forms in use and surveyed participant attitudes. That study provided a valuable empirical starting point, but it was constrained by several methodological limitations: the raw field notes and interview records are no longer available, phonological and prevalence claims cannot be independently verified, and the analytical vocabulary relied on a categorisation of the data as a stable pidgin without establishing the conditions that would warrant that claim. No systematic codebook anchored to surviving, citable evidence has been produced from that material. A separate body of hotel exchange data published by Vu (2018) offers a further source of English-mediated service interaction in the same city, but it too lacks an integrated descriptive framework covering all three analytical dimensions. More broadly, research on ELF use within hospitality and tourism has been explicitly identified as under-developed relative to its practical importance. Despite the risk of miscommunication in service settings, little is known about how hospitality staff negotiate meaning with international guests in real time. Such brief service encounters have also received less attention in ELF research than more stable institutional contexts (Thongphut & Kaur, 2023).

The present study addresses this gap through an archival and secondary-data reanalysis. Rather than returning to the original field sites, the study treats the surviving excerpts from (Bui, 2013) as a historical corpus to be coded at the level of visible form, interactional sequence and reported perception. Nine published hotel currency-exchange extracts (Vu, 2018) are used as a separate secondary validation set to examine the transferability of the interactional codes. The central research question is:

How are simplified English practices represented and interactionally managed in the available evidence from selected tourism-service encounters in Ho Chi Minh City?

This is examined through three sub-questions:

1. *What linguistic-form patterns are represented in the surviving observational excerpts?*
2. *How do contextual and interactional practices, including repair, support or constrain service-task progression across the archival dialogues and secondary validation extracts?*
3. *What perceived benefits, difficulties, and social evaluations are represented in the surviving follow-up interview evidence?*

The study is significant on two levels. Empirically, it extends the still-limited body of Vietnamese hospitality-communication research (Bui, 2013; Thongphut & Kaur, 2023; Vu, 2018) beyond isolated linguistic-form description to include interactional organisation and participant perception within a single account. Methodologically, the study's principal contribution is a preliminary, three-domain codebook for describing simplified English practices in tourism service encounters. Each code is defined operationally, paired with an exclusion rule and anchored to at least one citable evidence record (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; MacQueen et al., 1998). This codebook is designed as a reusable instrument for future fieldwork and is explicitly source-sensitive, describing what survives in the historical record rather than

making prevalence, speaker-grammar or inter-rater-reliability claims that the available evidence cannot support.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Simplified English in tourism service encounters

Tourism service encounters are a distinctive type of institutional interaction. They are typically brief, goal-oriented and task-structured, moving from an opening through a service request to delivery and closure (Gali, 2023). They take place between interlocutors who differ in role, cultural background and, in international tourism settings, first language. When no shared language is available at the level of fluency, participants draw on whatever communicative resources they possess, including limited second-language knowledge, gestures, objects and shared physical context, to accomplish the service task. English, as the dominant global language of international tourism, is the resource most frequently mobilised in these situations across Southeast Asia, including Vietnam (Vu, 2018).

For the purposes of this study, simplified English practices are defined, working from the surviving evidence rather than from an assumed variety label, as the recurring linguistic-form, interactional, and pragmatic adaptations through which staff and guests conduct English-mediated service talk under conditions of limited shared linguistic resources. This definition is deliberately descriptive, naming a pattern of use without presupposing that the pattern constitutes a stable, bounded linguistic system such as a pidgin.

2.2. Simplified English practices and related theoretical concepts

Several established sociolinguistic concepts provide partial explanations for the type of language found in tourism service encounters. A pidgin is generally understood as a reduced contact language that develops when groups without a common language need to communicate over an extended period (Holm, 2000). Its vocabulary is typically drawn largely from a socially dominant superstrate language, while a substrate language may influence aspects of its structure and meaning (Holm, 2000). In the present context, English can be treated as the superstrate because it supplies most of the vocabulary used in staff–guest interaction, while Vietnamese functions as the substrate. This distinction is still useful descriptively, even though the available evidence is not sufficient to establish grammatical transfer.

Formal simplification alone, however, is not enough to identify a pidgin. Research on pidgin and creole formation points to broader social and linguistic conditions, including limited bilingualism between the groups in contact, sustained multilingual interaction, the need for a shared means of communication, and sufficient social distance for a distinct contact variety to develop rather than one language simply replacing another (Harris, 1986; Thomason, 2001). Different explanations have been proposed for this process, including theories of simplification and foreigner talk, monogenesis and polygenesis, Bickerton’s Language Bioprogram Hypothesis, and accounts that emphasise social conditions such as conquest, trade, and tourism (Bickerton, 1981; Harris, 1986). The present study does not need to resolve these competing explanations. Its archival excerpts are too limited to demonstrate the duration, stability, or community-level conventionalisation required for a confident pidgin classification.

Interlanguage offers a different explanation. It refers to the developing linguistic system constructed by an individual learner of an additional language. This system is shaped by the learner's existing linguistic knowledge and changes as acquisition progresses (Selinker, 1972). Unlike pidginisation, which depends on shared patterns becoming established across a speech community, interlanguage concerns the developing competence of an individual speaker. A form such as copula omission or an unmarked plural could therefore arise from interlanguage development, but it could also reflect other processes.

One such process is foreigner talk, in which a more proficient speaker modifies or simplifies language when addressing someone believed to have limited proficiency (Harris, 1986). English as a lingua franca provides another perspective. Rather than treating non-standard forms primarily as deficiencies, ELF research considers how speakers with different first languages adapt English to meet immediate communicative needs (Seidlhofer, 2011). Because pidginisation, interlanguage development, foreigner-talk accommodation, and ELF use may produce similar surface forms, distinguishing among them requires evidence about community-wide patterns, individual language development, speaker roles, and communicative function. The surviving report-level excerpts do not provide all of this information. For that reason, the present study uses simplified English practices as a cautious, source-sensitive description rather than assigning the data to any single theoretical category.

2.3. Linguistic-form simplification

The linguistic-form domain of the present codebook draws on a set of features documented repeatedly across the pidgin, creole and contact-linguistics literature. Article and copula omission are among the most widely reported features of reduced-form contact varieties (Mühlhäusler, 1997; Wardhaugh, 2008). Alongside reduced plural, agreement and tense marking, in which number and time reference are frequently carried lexically, through a numeral or a temporal adverb, rather than through inflection (Holm, 2000; Sebba, 1997). Negation in such varieties is commonly expressed through a single invariant particle rather than the auxiliary-based negation of the lexifier language, and pronoun systems are often reduced or reorganised, with a single form doing service across grammatical roles that the target language marks separately (Todd, 2005; Winford, 2003). Word order, similarly, does not always follow the constituent-ordering rules of either contributing language, but instead reflects a working compromise shaped by processing ease and communicative priority (Mühlhäusler, 1997).

At the lexical level, two further patterns recur across the literature. Multifunctionality which refers to a small set of high-frequency items pressed into service across a wider range of meanings than they carry in the lexifier language is a well-documented compensatory strategy in reduced-contact varieties generally (Holm, 2000; Sebba, 1997). This allows a limited vocabulary to cover a disproportionately large communicative range. Reduplication serves a related, semantically compensatory function, most often intensifying or emphasising meaning in the absence of other grammatical marking (Mühlhäusler, 1997). These lexical and syntactic patterns are the features carried forward into the present codebook, each operationalised with reference to this established descriptive literature rather than to any single dataset, consistent with a source-sensitive approach that keeps the coding scheme applicable beyond the present study's own material.

2.4. Interactional and pragmatic practices in service encounters

A purely formal description of reduced linguistic features does not capture how those features function within service interaction. Scholarship on institutional talk and service encounters demonstrates that meaning in brief, goal-oriented exchanges is jointly constructed from linguistic form, sequential position, shared task orientation and physical or situational context (Gali, 2023). Linguistic-form simplification is embedded in the sequential organisation of the service encounter itself. Service talk typically proceeds through recognisable moves including an opening or offer of help, a service request, provision of the service, and a closing. Even minimally marked politeness accompanies these moves where grammatical marking elsewhere is reduced. Because service encounters are task-bound, meaning is frequently context-dependent in ways that compensate for formal reduction: a menu, a visible product, or an established service routine can supply exactly the disambiguating information that reduced grammatical form leaves unspecified. Research on ELF use in hospitality and tourism specifically has shown that service staff often draw on deliberate, explicit accommodation strategies such as slowing down, checking understanding, reformulating to manage this kind of contextual dependency in cross-linguistic transactions (Thongphut & Kaur, 2023).

When understanding falters despite this contextual support, participants draw on repetition, requests for clarification and reformulation to repair the trouble before it disrupts task progression; where these practices are absent or unsuccessful, a breakdown can occur, with resolution depending on whether either party can identify and correct the source of the mishearing or misinterpretation (Thongphut & Kaur, 2023). This body of work indicates that the communicative adequacy of simplified English in service settings cannot be assessed from linguistic form alone: it depends jointly on contextual support and on the interactional repair work participants perform when understanding is incomplete.

2.5. Reported perceptions and social evaluation of simplified English

Participant perceptions of simplified contact-language use are complex and rarely uniform. The same communicative practice may be experienced as efficient by one participant and as frustrating or socially marked by another, depending on prior language experience, communicative expectations and social positioning. In the broader pidgin and creole literature, simplified contact varieties have often been described as carrying low prestige, particularly in communities where they are associated historically with enslaved or economically subordinate populations (Todd, 2005). The perception that use of a reduced variety signals low educational attainment or limited language ability has been documented in a range of settings and has shaped language attitudes among both speakers and listeners (Siegel, 1997). At the same time, research on lingua franca communication has shown that pragmatic effectiveness and relational warmth can be maintained even when standard grammatical norms are not met, and that participants often report valuing comprehensibility and task completion over formal correctness.

A separate concern in this literature is the social evaluation of speakers who use simplified forms. Non-standard or contact varieties are vulnerable to deficit framing, in which reduced grammatical marking is read, often inaccurately, as an index of a speaker's educational level or competence more broadly; this pattern has been documented across pidgin- and creole-using

communities, where formal use of a reduced variety has at times been perceived by its own users as a marker of low prestige or as a rejection of the standard language (Siegel, 1997), while at other times the same reduced variety has instead been embraced as an efficient, practical communicative resource with no necessary implication about the user's underlying competence (Todd, 2005). The present study's codebook treats perceived usefulness, difficulty, irritation, misunderstanding, positive evaluation and reluctance to evaluate as attested categories to be identified in report-level evidence, consistent with this literature's caution against reading any one of them as the dominant or default response.

2.6. English-mediated communication in Vietnamese tourism

English functions as the principal contact language in Vietnam's tourism and hospitality sector, mediating routine staff–guest communication between speakers with substantially uneven levels of formal training. Existing empirical research on this communication remains comparatively limited but growing. (Vu, 2018) documented staff–guest currency-exchange talk across four Vietnamese hotels, describing the resulting language as transactional, routinised and grammatically “messy” in ways broadly consistent with the linguistic-form patterns discussed above, while Thongphut and Kaur (2023) examined the explicit accommodation strategies hospitality staff use when communicating in English as a *lingua franca* with international guests more broadly across Southeast Asian tourism settings. Together, these sources describe general patterns of English use in Vietnamese and regional tourism service work, but neither combines sustained attention to linguistic form, interactional organisation and participant perception within a single analytic framework applied to a single body of evidence.

2.7. Research gap and conceptual framework

The review above identifies three converging gaps in the existing literature. First, while individual linguistic-form features of simplified English in Vietnamese service encounters have been described (Bui, 2013), no integrated, multi-domain codebook has been developed that covers linguistic-form patterns, interactional and pragmatic structures, and participant perceptions within a single analytical instrument. These three dimensions are treated separately in much of the literature, but they are co-present in service encounters and must be analysed together to produce a complete picture of how simplified practices function. Second, the surviving evidence from the principal prior study is not sufficient to establish that the practices documented constitute a stable pidgin. A source-sensitive analytical framework is therefore needed to describe the forms present in the available evidence without over-claiming about stability, prevalence or conventionalisation.

The present study addresses this gap by developing a preliminary codebook organised around the three domains established above: a linguistic-form domain, an interactional and pragmatic domain, and a reported-perceptions domain, applied to the archival material from (Bui, 2013) and, for the interactional and pragmatic domain, checked for transferability against (Vu, 2018) secondary hotel extracts. Consistent with the pidgin criteria discussed above, the framework does not assume that the coded patterns constitute a stable pidgin; rather, it treats simplified English practices as a working, source-sensitive description of the available evidence, to be evaluated against stable-pidgin criteria only if and when a more complete, prospective corpus becomes available. This analytical framework directly informs the study's

methodology, data collection procedures and codebook design, and structures the presentation of findings around the same three domains established here.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design and scope

The study adopts a qualitative exploratory design to reanalyse English-mediated tourism-service encounters preserved from an earlier field study in Ho Chi Minh City. Its purpose is descriptive: to identify linguistic-form, interactional and pragmatic practices represented in the surviving evidence and to examine the perceptions reported by participants. The design does not test communicative effectiveness, estimate the prevalence of particular forms, or establish that the observed practices constitute a stable pidgin. The term simplified English practices is therefore used throughout the analysis as a source-sensitive description of the available evidence.

3.2. Research setting and participants

The earlier fieldwork took place in one diner and one convenience store in Ho Chi Minh City. The surviving report describes 20 participants: five Vietnamese service staff and 15 international visitors. All 20 were reported to have participated in natural service interactions and to have completed brief follow-up interviews. Individual demographic profiles, language histories and participant-interaction linkages are no longer available; consequently, the present study reports only the aggregate sample description and makes no claim that the group represents tourism workers or visitors more generally.

3.3. Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis was a source-linked evidence record. The archival observation component comprised five reported dialogues and 12 isolated utterances. The interview component comprised six aggregate summaries or reported participant accounts retained in the earlier report. A further nine published hotel currency-exchange extracts were analysed as a separate secondary validation set. The complete analytical inventory therefore contained 32 units, but the three evidence components were kept distinct because they differ in source, context and evidential strength.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

3.4.1. Naturalistic observation

During the earlier fieldwork, notes were written while service interactions were being observed. No audio or video recording was made. The five dialogue excerpts retain speaker roles and some sequential context, whereas the 12 isolated utterances preserve only the wording and limited role or setting information reported in the earlier document. Because the original field notes no longer survive, these excerpts are treated as report-level evidence rather than verbatim transcripts. They support analysis of visible lexical and morphosyntactic forms, but they do not support analysis of pronunciation, intonation, timing, gesture or exact turn delivery.

3.4.2. Follow-up interviews

All 20 participants reportedly completed brief follow-up interviews, and their responses were recorded in handwritten notes. The first question asked whether the communication

labelled pidgin facilitated interaction with foreigners; the second asked whether users of such communication appeared low-educated. The earlier report states that English and Vietnamese versions were available, but only the English wording survives. Both questions are treated as methodologically limited because the first presupposes the category pidgin and the second is leading and deficit-oriented. The individual notes and participant-level response records are unavailable. Accordingly, the analysis uses only six surviving report-level evidence units and does not recreate 20 interview logs, exact response counts or percentages.

3.4.3. Archival corpus and secondary validation

The 23 archival units were analysed as historical, report-level evidence. To examine whether the interactional and pragmatic code family could be applied outside this material, nine numbered staff-guest currency-exchange extracts published by Vu (2018) were selected as a separate validation set. These extracts provided identifiable service roles, sequential context and both short and multi-turn exchanges. They were not pooled with the archival material for combined frequencies or claims about contemporary practices in Ho Chi Minh City.

Table 1. *Composition and use of the analytical corpus*

Evidence component	Units	Analytical use	Principal limitation
Observational excerpts	17	Descriptive coding of reported linguistic forms and limited contextual features.	No raw notes or recordings; no token, speaker, phonological or prevalence claims.
Reported interview evidence	6	Coding of reported usefulness, comprehensibility, difficulty, affect, misunderstanding and social evaluation.	No individual answers, auditable response totals or reconstructable percentages.
Secondary validation extracts	9	Transfer check for interactional and pragmatic codes in published hotel exchanges.	Different source and setting; not combined with the archival set for frequencies.
Total	32	Source-linked evidence records included in the present analysis.	Not a reconstruction of the original raw corpus.

3.5. Coding procedure

A preliminary, source-sensitive codebook was developed iteratively. The first domain describes linguistic forms visible in the preserved wording, including article and copula omission, reduced number, agreement and tense marking, simplified negation, pronoun and demonstrative variation, non-reference word order, lexical multifunctionality and reduplication. The second domain describes interactional and pragmatic work, including openings, service requests, politeness, offers of help, lexical compression, repetition, clarification, reformulation, breakdown and task completion. The third domain captures reported perceptions, limitations, affect and response behaviour in the interview evidence. Each code included an operational definition, an exclusion rule and an evidence anchor. Multiple codes could be assigned to one unit when independently supported by the source wording or sequence.

Analysis proceeded in three passes. First, each archival observation record was coded for directly visible forms and, where dialogue context survived, for supported contextual features.

Second, the six interview units were coded as reported perceptions or limitations rather than as evidence of objective effectiveness. Third, the interactional and pragmatic codes were applied to the nine secondary extracts to examine transfer beyond the archival set. Negative and ambiguous cases were retained. Descriptive counts reported below indicate the number of source-linked records assigned a code; they are not token frequencies, participant frequencies or estimates of current usage. No inter-coder reliability statistic is claimed for this preliminary reanalysis.

Table 2. *Compact analytical codebook*

Analytical domain	Codes	Analytical focus	Evidence base
Linguistic-form practices	ARTICLE-OM; ARTICLE-VAR; COPULA-OM; PLURAL-OM; AGR-RED; TENSE-RED; NEG-SIMPLE; PRO-VAR; DEM-VAR; WORD-ORDER; LEX-MULT; REDUP	Variation represented in articles, copula, number, agreement, tense, negation, pronouns, demonstratives, constituent order, lexical function and reduplication.	Archival observation excerpts
Interactional and pragmatic practices	CONTEXT; OPENING; SERVICE-REQUEST; POLITENESS; OFFER-HELP; LEXICAL-COMPRESSSION; REPETITION; CLARIFICATION; REFORMULATION; BREAKDOWN; TASK-COMPLETE	How service encounters are initiated, compressed, interpreted, repaired and brought to completion.	Archival dialogues and validation extracts
Reported perceptions and limitations	PERCEIVED-USEFUL; TIME-EFFORT; COMPREHENSIBLE; DIFFICULTY; IRRITATION; MISUNDERSTANDING; RELUCTANCE; POSITIVE-EVAL; SHARED-L2	Reported usefulness, effort, comprehensibility, difficulty, affect, misunderstanding, response behaviour and social evaluation.	Report-level interview evidence

3.6. Ethics Statement

The earlier fieldwork was conducted with oral permission from the participating venues and oral consent from participants. No formal institutional ethics approval or waiver was obtained or reported, and the present article does not imply retrospective approval. Participant names and direct identifiers are not retained in the analytical dataset. Because the individual field notes and interview records are unavailable, only anonymised report-level excerpts and aggregate evidence units are reproduced.

4. Findings

4.1. Analytical overview

The findings are organised by evidence domain rather than by an assumed language variety. The observation set supported a group of recurring form-focused codes and one context code; the validation set demonstrated the applicability of 10 interactional and pragmatic codes; and the interview material supported nine perception or limitation codes. Because more than one code could be assigned to an evidence record, code counts are not additive and should not be interpreted as the number of speakers who used a form.

4.2. Linguistic-form practices

Within the 17 preserved observation records, copula omission was the most recurrent form-focused code, appearing in eight records. Simplified negation and non-reference word order were each coded in four records, while pronoun variation appeared in three. Article omission, plural omission and reduced subject-verb agreement each appeared in two records. Article variation, reduced tense marking, demonstrative variation, lexical multifunctionality and reduplication each had one preserved evidence anchor. These counts describe coverage within a small archival excerpt set; they do not establish rates of use or stability across speakers.

Several examples concern reduced nominal marking. The forms "Two sandwich" (OBS06) and "Three child" (OBS07) retain explicit numerical reference without plural inflection. "Me owner" (OBS08) combines pronoun variation with an omitted copula, and "That men from Singapore" (OBS11) displays demonstrative variation alongside copula omission. Article-related variation is represented by "Here menu" in OBS01, "No, free spoon sir" in OBS02 and "A shop now closed" in OBS13. The available context is sufficient to identify the formal contrast, but not to attribute each form to a stable speaker grammar.

Clause-level reduction is also visible in the surviving wording. "She like Heineken" (OBS09) and "He want beer and vegetarian spaghetti" (OBS14) lack the agreement marking expected in the reference form. Simplified negation appears in "Sorry, I no have changes" (OBS16) and, with lexical temporal reference, in "Yesterday, we no open" (OBS17). Non-reference word order is represented in "Wait me a second" (OBS04) and "Today have spaghetti delicious" (OBS12). In OBS05, "Spaghetti OK you sir and madam?" and "You coca, madam" show how short lexical items and local word order can perform service functions within a recoverable interaction.

Table 3. *Selected evidence anchors used in the findings*

Evidence ID	Selected reported form	Preliminary code(s)	Analytical relevance
OBS01	Here menu. / Sorry, no tuna.	ARTICLE-OM; COPULA-OM; NEG-SIMPLE; WORD-ORDER	Multiple reduced forms occur within a service sequence that continues to an order.
OBS04	Wait me a second! / Here your boiled egg.	WORD-ORDER; COPULA-OM	Non-reference forms remain interpretable in the immediate service context.
OBS05	Spaghetti OK you sir and madam? / You coca, madam.	LEX-MULT; WORD-ORDER; COPULA-OM	Compressed wording supports a service check and delivery move.

Evidence ID	Selected reported form	Preliminary code(s)	Analytical relevance
OBS06	Two sandwich.	PLURAL-OM	Numerical plurality is expressed without nominal inflection.
OBS08	Me owner.	PRO-VAR; COPULA-OM	Pronoun variation and copula omission co-occur.
OBS09	She like Heineken.	AGR-RED; PRO-VAR	Agreement reduction is visible; the pronoun interpretation depends on context.
OBS16	Sorry, I no have changes.	NEG-SIMPLE	Negation is expressed through a reduced pattern.
OBS17	Yesterday, we no open.	NEG-SIMPLE; TENSE-RED	Temporal reference is supplied lexically rather than by verbal inflection.

4.3. Interactional and pragmatic practices

The five preserved dialogues show that the reported forms occurred within recognisable service activities rather than as decontextualised grammar examples. In OBS01, an unavailable menu item prompted an alternative offer and the sequence proceeded to an order. In OBS03, the immediate meal context made the anchovy-and-butter choice interpretable. In OBS04 and OBS05, compressed staff turns occurred alongside customer questions, acknowledgements and thanks. These sequences do not demonstrate that every message was fully understood, but they show why formal deviation alone cannot be treated as evidence of interactional breakdown.

The secondary validation set extended this analysis to published hotel currency-exchange encounters. A service request was coded in the first five extracts; four also contained conventional politeness markers, three contained an opening and two began with an offer of help. Lexical compression appeared in two extracts. In the longer exchanges, repetition and clarification were each coded in three extracts, reformulation in two, and task completion in three. Only one extract displayed a clear breakdown, where ambiguous wording led to non-understanding and repeated reformulation. The contrast between this breakdown and the completed transactions indicates that communicative outcome depended on sequential checking and repair, not simply on whether a turn matched a reference grammatical form.

4.4. Reported perceptions and limitations

The interview evidence was mixed rather than uniformly positive. One aggregate evidence unit associated simplified forms with reduced time and effort, comprehensible vocabulary chunks and simpler grammar. A second retained difficulty, additional interpretive effort, irritation and withdrawal from an interaction. A reported account by an Irish visitor described misunderstanding the expression "six sir, two car" as sick; because this incident was participant-reported and occurred outside the two observed venues, it is treated as an account of difficulty rather than an observed study-site event.

The second interview question produced both social evaluation and response reluctance. Some Vietnamese interviewees reportedly hesitated or declined to answer, a response that may reflect the question's leading and socially evaluative wording. The earlier report characterised the overall social evaluation as positive and stated that users were not generally viewed as less educated. A Canadian visitor also compared the encounters with other experiences of learning or using English as an additional language. However, the absence of participant-level records means that no numerator, percentage or group comparison can be verified. The findings therefore support the coexistence of perceived usefulness, difficulty and social sensitivity, not a claim of consensus.

5. Discussion

5.1. Situated simplification rather than a stable pidgin

The reanalysis identifies a limited set of recurring simplification practices, especially copula omission, reduced negation and non-reference word order. Recurrence within the preserved excerpts makes these forms analytically describable, but it does not establish a stable pidgin. Evidence for such a claim would require a larger corpus, repeated observations of identifiable speakers, evidence of conventionalisation across users and a clear distinction from interlanguage, accommodation, foreigner talk and English as a lingua franca practices. The present formulation therefore treats the patterns as situated resources in selected service encounters. This interpretation is compatible with work showing that reduced morphosyntax may arise under contact and additional-language processing conditions without, by itself, defining a new language system (Plag, 2011).

5.2. Communicative work across form, context and repair

The findings also shift attention from isolated non-reference forms to the organisation of service activity. The archival dialogues show how objects, menu choices, customer responses and routine service expectations can make short turns interpretable. The validation extracts show that openings, direct requests, politeness, repetition, clarification and reformulation contribute to the progress of a transaction. Crucially, a reduced form did not automatically produce either success or failure. One sequence displayed breakdown, whereas several others reached acceptance or closure after checking and repair. Communicative adequacy is therefore better understood as jointly achieved in interaction than as an inherent property of a simplified code.

5.3. Interpreting participant perceptions cautiously

The surviving interview evidence supports a similarly qualified interpretation. Some participants reportedly valued reduced time, effort and grammatical complexity, while others described difficulty, irritation or misunderstanding. Reluctance to answer the socially loaded second question further indicates that attitudes cannot be reduced to a simple positive-negative scale. Removing the unsupported percentage claims is important because the surviving evidence cannot establish how perceptions were distributed across staff and visitors. The interview material is best used to identify the range of reported positions and to guide future instrument design, not to demonstrate objective communicative effectiveness.

5.4. Implications for tourism English pedagogy

The study did not evaluate a teaching intervention, so it cannot support teaching non-reference forms as a target variety or using them as a proven scaffold. A more defensible implication is to make tourism-English learners aware of how meaning is negotiated when linguistic resources are limited. Training can emphasise intelligibility, service-task completion, conventional politeness, clarification requests, reformulation and register appropriateness, all of which can be observed and assessed in role-plays or simulated service encounters. Contrastive noticing may also help learners recognise reduced forms while continuing to develop control of standard forms. This functional emphasis is consistent with task-oriented accounts of intercultural communication in tourism (Gali, 2023), but its effectiveness would need to be tested directly.

5.5. Limitations and directions for future research

The analysis is constrained by the historical, report-level status of the archival material. The original notes, recordings, participant profiles and individual interview answers are unavailable; the observation set is small and limited to two venues; timing, pronunciation, gesture and repair cannot be reconstructed; and no independent recoding statistic is available. The separate hotel validation material was used only to examine code transfer, not to update the archival sample or establish current prevalence. The preliminary codebook is therefore the main methodological output, not a definitive taxonomy of tourism-service English in Ho Chi Minh City.

Future research should collect a prospective multi-site corpus with dated consent, formal ethics review where required, participant language profiles, audio or video recordings, time-aligned transcripts and contextual metadata. The codebook can then be tested through independent coding and sequential analysis of clarification, reformulation and task completion. Interview questions should avoid presupposing a pidgin label or educational deficit.

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Author Contributions

Bui Thi Phuong Thao and Vu Mai Phuong: Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing—Original Draft, and Writing—Review & Editing.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethics Statement

The present study involved a secondary reanalysis of anonymised, report-level materials from an earlier field study and did not involve new recruitment, participant contact, or primary data collection. The earlier fieldwork was conducted with oral permission from the participating venues and oral consent from participants. No formal institutional ethics approval or waiver was obtained or reported for the original study. Accordingly, no ethics approval code is available for the present article, and this statement does not imply retrospective approval.

Informed Consent Statement

Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to restrictions to protect participant privacy.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors used NotebookLM (Google) and Claude (Anthropic) to assist with reading and organizing source materials, preliminary thematic classification, and language editing. These tools were used only as supporting aids; all classifications, interpretations, coding decisions, and revisions were reviewed and verified by the authors against the original sources and study data. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the manuscript.

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