



An Investigation on Escort Interpreting Practice in Burkina Faso

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Abstract

This article examines the practice of escort interpreting in Burkina Faso, with a focus on professional considerations, including the profiles, roles, and responsibilities of practitioners. By cross-referencing the results obtained from questionnaires and interviews, and drawing on Tseng's model of professionalisation, the study reveals that escort interpreting is predominantly performed by bilingual guides who lack formal training as professional interpreters. Their responsibilities often extend beyond mere interpretation, which is occasionally overlooked. The findings indicate a significant lack of structure and clear role definitions within the escort interpreting profession in Burkina Faso. This situation suggests that escort interpreting in Burkina Faso is characterised by an organisational void, necessitating action from relevant stakeholders to enhance both tourism and interpreting practices.

Keywords:

Escort Interpreting, Tourism, Profession, Challenges.

How to cite: DIALGA, Y., & GANDU, S. (2025). An Investigation on Escort Interpreting Practice in Burkina Faso. *GPH-International Journal of Educational Research*, 8(01), 136-160.
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14634259>



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1. Introduction

Interpretation, according to Zahran (2007), is a process of interlinguistic and intercultural mediation that orally translates a spoken message or text. Cultural and linguistic differences, which are closely linked, have a direct influence on this process. Concepts, terms and expressions, often rooted in their culture of origin, require an in-depth knowledge of the cultural context in order to be interpreted correctly. The interpreter's job is to bridge these gaps, making these specific cultural references accessible.

Tourism, which is expanding rapidly, requires highly qualified professionals, particularly escort interpreters. They are the true ambassadors of tourist destinations, establishing special relationships with visitors while ensuring sustainability. In the context of international tourism, the absence of linguistic mediation makes the resources of a destination inaccessible, misunderstood and undervalued. Interpretation, whether interlinguistic or intralinguistic, of heritage, living culture and cultural identity is therefore at the heart of the tour guide's role (Hsieh, 2003).

Burkina Faso, with its rich cultural heritage and geographical location, is a major tourist destination in West Africa. Located at the edge of the savannah and the Sahel, it attracts large numbers of visitors every year. While July to August is traditionally the tourist season, the period from November to April, marked by major cultural events such as the SIAO (Salon international de artisanat de Ouagadougou), FESPACO (Festival Panafricain du cinema et de la television de Ouagadougou), the SITHO (Salon international du tourisme de l'hotellerie de Ouagadougou) and the SNC (Semaine nationale de la culture), is increasingly popular. In 2013, the country welcomed 217,988 visitors, 60.19% of whom came for professional reasons between 2008 and 2012 (Source: Direction de la Prospective et de l'Intelligence Économique, 2014).

However, Burkina Faso's tourism sector faces challenges, not least the language barrier. Escort interpreters are essential to facilitate communication, guarantee a pleasant tourist experience and meet visitors' expectations. From reception at the hotel to excursions and shopping, the interpreter accompanies the tourist at every stage of their stay, influencing their perception and experience.

The absence of interpretation creates a barrier that compromises the tourist experience and leads to dissatisfaction. In Burkina Faso, as in any other destination, the interpreter plays a crucial role. This study therefore looks at the practice of escort interpreting in the country.

1.1. Problem

Escort interpreting is a key element of global tourism, facilitating communication between visitors and local populations. In Burkina Faso, this sector, although essential, remains little known. Moreover, there is a very few existing literatures pertaining to the subject area; thus, this work aims at filling that gap.

Against this backdrop, the study problem raises two (02) questions:

- a. What are the profiles of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso?
- b. What are the roles and responsibilities of the escort interpreters in Burkina Faso?

1.2. Objectives

The aim of this article is based on a diptych which consists of

- a. Determining the profiles of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso
- b. Exploring the roles and responsibilities of escorts in Burkina Faso.

1.3 Hypotheses

On the basis of the research questions, the following assumptions can be made:

- a. Escort interpreting in Burkina Faso is mostly practiced by bilingual guides and untrained interpreters;
- b. Escort interpreting in Burkina Faso is characterised by an organisational vacuum as regards the roles and responsibilities of the players involved.

2. Literature Review

This section reviews the literature relevant to this study.

2.1. Concepts

This section defines key terms related to this study

2.1.1. Interpreting

Gentile et al (1996) define interpreting as the oral transfer of a message between speakers of different languages.

In contrast, Sleskovitch (1998) states that interpreting should not be seen as a simple translation of words. The interpreter is expected to discover the meaning and make it explicit for others. She insists that interpreting is more like painting than photography. On the one hand, photography reproduces words without trying to explain their meaning. Painting, on the other hand, seeks to discover meaning, to convey a message, and reflects the object as seen through the eyes of the painter.

2.1.2. Conference interpreting

Conference interpreting originated during the First World War. Haber (1978) states that during the First World War, some high-ranking American and British negotiators did not speak French, which made it necessary to use interpreters. During the Nuremberg (1945-1946) and Tokyo (1946-1948) trials, simultaneous interpreting progressed, making conference interpreting more effective.

Krsnik (2017:13) defines conference interpreting as the act of conveying a message in one language into another language during international summits, professional seminars and bilateral or multilateral meetings of heads of state and government. Conference interpreting is also used at meetings among business leaders, social and trade union representatives, and at congress meetings.

In the light of the above, we can see that conference interpreting has evolved from its beginnings during the First World War to become a global mainstay in various sectors, mainly in a formal setting.

2.1.3. Community interpretation

Community interpretation is that done between representatives of public agencies or services and a member of an ethnic community or minority. Public services include legal, educational,

governmental, health or social services, while the ethnic community may be refugees, immigrants or local people (Schjoldager et al, 2017:5).

Community interpreting enables people who are not fluent in the country's official language(s) to communicate with public service providers and also to access public services (Mikkelsen, 1992:2).

2.1.4. Escort interpreting

Escort interpreting is another sub-type of community interpreting. It is important to note, however, that Mikkelsen (2002:2) considers it to be a type of interpreting in its own right. Some researchers classify escort interpreting in the tourism sector as business interpreting (Rudvin & Tomassini, 2011: 68). However, escort interpreting and community interpreting have common denominators such as the context and the modes of interpretation used. Therefore, in this article, escort interpreting is examined through the prism of community interpreting.

According to the National Standard Guide for Community Interpreting Services (2007), escort interpreting takes place when an interpreter accompanies a person with limited proficiency in the target language for a pre-agreed period of time and facilitates communication in different settings and contexts. Jagieski & al (2016:84) adopt the same definition. They define escort interpreting in terms of the situation in which it is performed. They also define it as elbow interpretation.

2.1.5. Tourism

According to the UNWTO, tourism is defined as a social, cultural and economic phenomenon involving the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment, for personal or commercial/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (who may be tourists or day-trippers, residents or non-residents) and tourism is linked to their activities, some of which involve tourist expenditure. So far, the definitions of tourism are diverse and varied, but nothing significant has changed. The question of the temporal framework or temporal boundary characterising tourism has been and is barely addressed by most authors and there is no common temporal boundary. However, we stand by and agree with the UNWTO definition for the time being, as it is comprehensive and undisputed. It should be noted that this definition of tourism is widely used and shared.

2.1.6. Tourism industry

The tourism industry refers to all establishments whose main activity covers the characteristics of tourists. Tourism industries are the producers of products characteristic of tourism or simply tourism products. Tourism industries are synonymous with activities characteristic of tourism and are sometimes used interchangeably (ICTS, 2008) within the framework of the UNWTO.

2.1.7. Tourism product

A tourism product is a combination of tangible and intangible elements that represents the core of the destination's marketing mix and creates an overall experience for the visitor, including emotional aspects for potential customers. Examples are: natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around the specific focus. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels and has a life cycle (UNWTO, 2019).

Today, tourism is not limited to product development. It relies more on quality, insight and the ability to access technological information, partners and contacts on a global scale.

2.1.8. Interpretation of tourism products

Tourism interpretation is a communication medium used to present a story to pique visitors' interest and help them understand and better grasp the innate value and significance of specific attractions (Boonprakob & Chaigasem, 2018). It is an educational activity aimed at revealing meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, first-hand experiences and illustrative media rather than solely communicating factual information (Moscardo et al. 2004).

Interpretation refers broadly to the educational activities used in places such as zoos, museums, heritage sites and national parks, to explain to visitors the meaning or significance of what they are seeing. Interpretation includes elements such as signs, brochures, leaflets and guided tours, as well as presentations and exhibitions (Tilden, 2009).

According to the above definitions, the interpretation of a tourism product is therefore a means of communication designed to help tourists understand the object or phenomenon that interests them, or what they are experiencing. The media may vary from physical objects, human beings or recordings, among others.

2.2. Theoretical review: Tseng's model of professionalisation

Tseng's model of professionalisation was built on previous research in the sociology of professions, drawn from Trait Theory and Hoyte-West Control Theory (2020; 183-196). Trait Theory posits that an occupation becomes a profession by attaining certain characteristics such as adherence to a code of ethics, a body of theoretical knowledge, loyalty to colleagues, licensure or registration (Carter et al., 1990). Proposed by Tseng, he argues that the more practitioners in an occupation are able to exercise control over the substance of their work and their market, the more they professionalise that occupation. He considers occupations in terms of the amount of power they wield. Powerful associations are characteristic of professions because professionalisation is a collective effort and not an individual one (Tseng, 1992). Tseng noted that Control Theory is more useful than Trait Theory for understanding how an occupation becomes a profession, but does not provide guidelines for a profession to achieve autonomy. Thus, the use of Tseng's professionalisation model, through the analysis of the data collected, enabled us to determine the profile, the role and responsibilities of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso.

2.3. Empirical review

Zhang (2020) wrote a report on commercial escort interpreting in China. The report examines the roles played by the author in one of her escort interpreting assignments and indicates that escort interpreting activities are mainly consecutive, but sometimes involve other interpreting tasks such as whispering and simultaneous interpreting. Through her experience, she demonstrates that escort interpreters play multiple roles such as transmitting information, organising events, transmitting culture, providing personal assistance and participating in communication.

Zhang's report (2020) sought to discover exactly what my study seeks to discover as well. The concept is the same. However, his report differs from our study in that it is a scientific

study based not on our own experience, but on data from the experience of interpreters, tourist authorities and destination managers. Our study went further in the scientific analysis of the data and tested the hypotheses to arrive at the conclusion. Nevertheless, our study supports the researcher's view in a scientific manner.

Kamel (2021) conducted research on the role of tour guides in tourism promotion and the impact on destination image and tourist revisit intention in Egypt. He argues that tour guides can be ambassadors for tourist countries and destinations, ensuring tourist satisfaction, brand image and revisit by tourists. His study aimed to assess the relationship between the role of tour guides in promoting tourism, creating a good image of the destination and improving tourists' revisit intention. The study confirmed the mediating role of satisfaction with guided tours, underlining the importance of tourist guides in promoting the destination's image and the intention to revisit. They make a positive contribution to tourist satisfaction and to the promotion of a destination through a new visit or positive word-of-mouth. The relationship between Kamel's (2021) study and mine is that both examine the same roles by the same service providers, with tour guides serving primarily as escort interpreters. The difference between the two studies is that Kamel (2021) focused on tour guides only, whereas my study focuses on escort interpreters, which includes tour guides among other professionals. In addition, our study focuses on linguistic aspects and raising questions about the language barrier

3. Methodology

This section deals with the methods used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data.

3.1. Size of the population

Our target population was made up of escort interpreters, bilingual tourist guides and tourism managers. Questionnaires were distributed to escort interpreters and bilingual tourist guides in the Centre region, and interviews were conducted with tourist authorities.

3.2. Sampling

Two sampling techniques were used. These were purposive sampling and random sampling.

Tourist sites in the Centre region of Burkina Faso were selected on the basis of purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling is the selection we adopted on the basis of some selection criteria. For this study, the aim was to obtain representative results.

Random sampling was used to select escort interpreters and tourist guide managers. Fifty-two interpreters were selected at random and six tourist guide managers were selected for interviews.

3.3. Data collection instruments

To carry out this study, we used questionnaires and structured interviews.

Firstly, the questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section is a covering letter with our identity, informing respondents of the subject of our survey and the purpose of the questionnaire. The second section consists of two parts, each part representing a research objective. The first part includes questions on the identity and profile of the interpreters (gender, age, place of residence, nationality and level of education, interpreting training,

languages spoken, working languages). The second part includes questions on the roles and responsibilities of interpreters and the professional status of escort interpreting in the tourism industry.

Finally, structured interviews were conducted with six tourism authorities. The main objective was to study what they perceived to be the role of escort interpreters, as well as the code of ethics under which interpreters work. This way of interviewing respondents allowed the researcher to collect at best the same or very similar data from different informants via phone calls and WhatsApp messages.

3.4.Data processing method and data coding procedure

The methods used to code and process the data, as well as the analysis of the data, are described below.

3.4.1. Data coding procedure

There are two parts to the coding procedures. The first for quantitative data and the second for qualitative data. Coding enabled us to organise the data. The quantitative data obtained from the questionnaires were categorised using Google forms. The main categories of data were then presented in the form of tables and figures to facilitate analysis and interpretation. The qualitative data collected from the questionnaires and interviews were coded on the basis of pre-established codes, which involved coding the textual data on the basis of the research objectives. This coding was carried out after systematically going through all the interview transcripts and classifying the information according to the research objectives. This coding process helped us to examine the profiles, roles and responsibilities of escort interpreters.

3.4.2. Data processing and analysis

The data collected was analysed critically and presented in the form of figures and tables.

The points of view expressed during the interviews were explored and we tried to find the justification for these points of view. In other words, we tried to find the logic behind them. A detailed analysis was carried out in accordance with the theoretical framework of this study.

The data collected at the selected tourist sites were presented and analysed according to the interpreter's identity and personal background, including nationality, gender, age, region of origin, academic background and training, spoken and working language, and professional experience. Other data on interpreters' association membership, code of ethics and the interpreting methods they use for escort interpreting was also collected.

3.5.Ethical considerations

Permission to conduct this study was granted by the university. Permission was also sought from the authorities of certain tourist sites in Ouagadougou. The people interviewed were informed of the research objectives and were allowed to ask questions in order to gain a better understanding of the stakes. They were also given the choice to participate or retreat when desired. Their permission was sought before the questionnaires were sent out. Interviews were made according to the availability of the interviewees. The interviewees chose the method of communication they preferred. For example, some people chose SMS rather than telephone calls, and vice versa. Respondents to the questionnaires and interviews had the choice of remaining anonymous or not.

4. Data presentation and analysis

In this section, data collected are presented, analysed and interpreted simultaneously

4.1 Data collected using questionnaires

4.1.2. Profile of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso

▪ Nationality

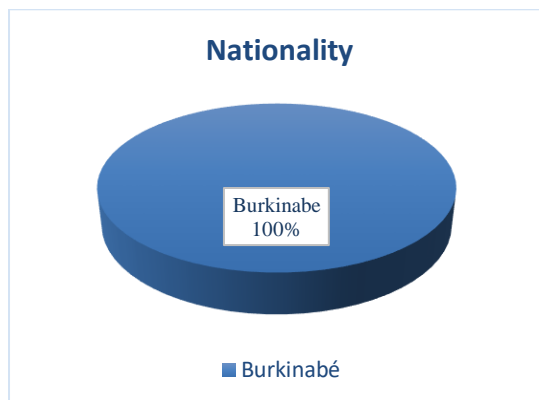


Figure 1: Breakdown of escort interpreters by nationality

The pie chart above shows that 100% of the 52 respondents to this survey of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso identified themselves as being Burkinabe. In other words, of the 60 individuals initially sampled, 52 responded and all indicated that they were Burkinabè. This clearly means that there is complete homogeneity in terms of nationality among the escort interpreters who took part in the study.

▪ Gender

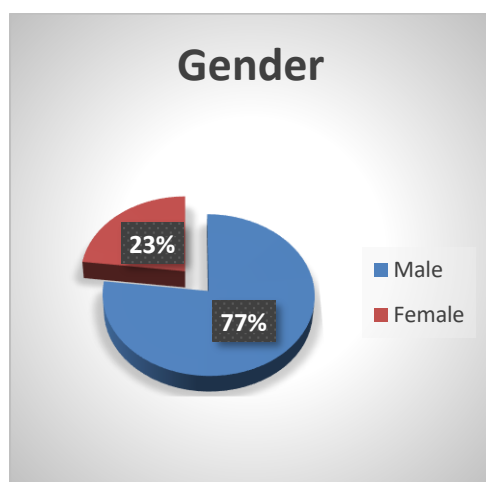


Figure 2: Breakdown of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso by gender

Figure 2 shows the gender disparity in the practice of escort interpreting in Burkina Faso. Although women are present in this field (23%), it is the male figure that emerges strongly, representing 77% of the 52 respondents who took part in this study.

This data highlights the predominance of men in this profession, reflecting the social dynamics and gender relations specific to Burkina Faso.

▪ **Age**

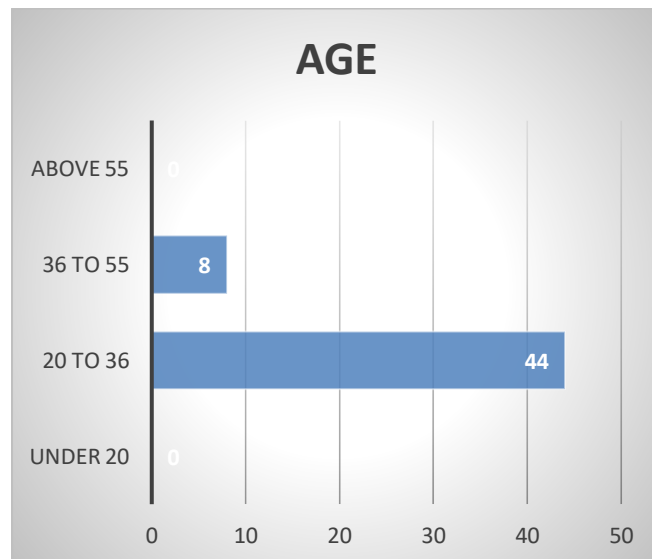


Figure 3: Age distribution of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso

Figure 3 shows the age distribution of the interpreters who responded to this survey in Burkina Faso. From a sample of 52 respondents (out of a total of 60), it can be seen that 85% of escort interpreters are aged between 25 and 35 and 15% are aged between 35 and 55%.

We conclude by saying that these data reveal a clear predominance of young people in the profession of escort interpreter in Burkina Faso. Individuals aged between 20 and 35 make up the bulk of the workforce, suggesting that the profession of escort interpreter mainly attracts young adults.

▪ **Level of study**

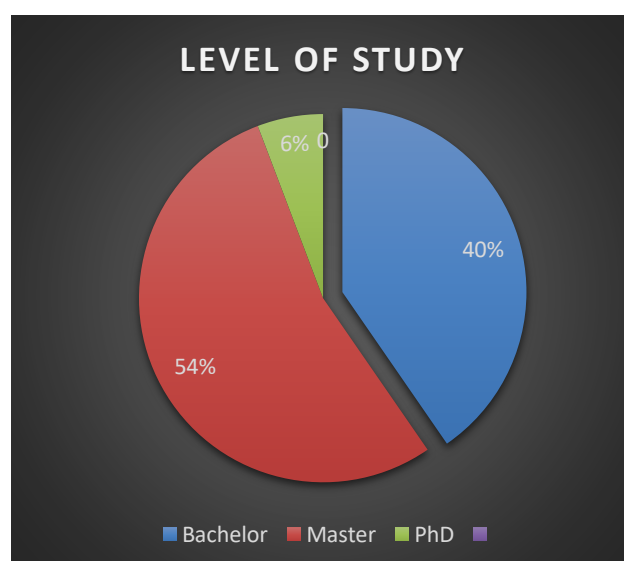


Figure 5: Breakdown of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso by level of education

Figure 5 shows the distribution of the level of education of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso. It is important to note that this sample represents 87% of the total population studied (60 individuals). At first glance, a Master's degree was in the majority, with 54% of respondents. This suggests that the profession of escort interpreter in Burkina Faso is attracting more and more people with a high level of education. The second highest level of education was a bachelor's degree, with 40% of respondents. This significant percentage indicates that bachelor's degree graduates also make up a large proportion of escort interpreters. Finally, doctorate level interpreters are very poorly represented, with only 6% of respondents. This can be explained by the fact that doctorate holders generally have access to other types of better qualified and better paid jobs.

Table 1: Breakdown of respondents' working languages

S/No	Working languages	Frequencies	Percentages
1	French	51	40.8%
2	English	49	39.2%
3	Mooré	13	10.4%
4	German	4	3.2%
5	Dioula	4	3.2%
6	Arabic	3	2.4%
7	Spanish	1	0.8%
	Total	125	100%

Table 1 above provides an interesting overview of the languages used in escort interpreting in Burkina Faso. At first glance, it is clear that French and English largely dominate the linguistic landscape of this profession, together accounting for 80% of the languages used. Their predominance can be explained by the strong presence of French-speaking and English-speaking tourists in the country. Consequently, this dominance suggests that escort interpreters need to master at least French and English to meet the needs of the majority of clients.

Moore and Dioula together account for 13.6% of the languages used. These national languages, which have become official languages, although less widespread than French and English, are important in the Burkinabe tourism context, particularly for communicating with local populations and in certain regions of the country. The presence of these languages indicates a need for intercultural communication and underlines the need to adapt to local specificities.

Finally, Arabic, German and Spanish, together accounting for 6.4% of respondents, are also used by a minority of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso. The presence of these languages suggests a certain diversification of the tourist clientele and an adaptation of the interpreting services on offer. Nevertheless, their low representation indicates that they are not a priority in the training of escort interpreters.

▪ **Working experience**

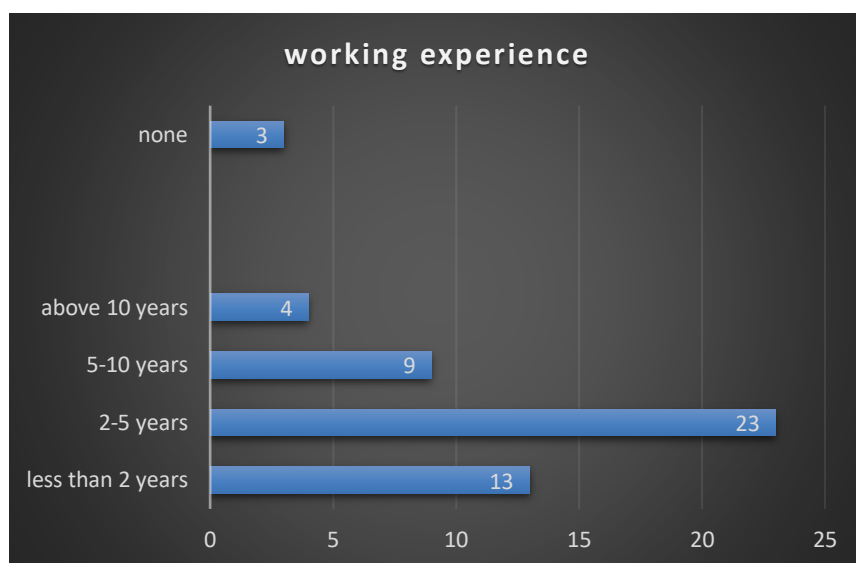


Figure 6: Breakdown of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso based on experience

Figure 6 shows a breakdown of the professional experience of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso. On the basis of the data in the graph, there is a predominance of professionals with relatively short experience, with a notable peak for those with less than 2 years' experience.

The data show that almost a quarter (25%) of escort interpreters have less than two years' experience. This high figure suggests a significant turnover in the profession, perhaps due to a growing demand for interpreters, new graduates entering the market or high staff turnover.

In addition, the experience bracket between 2 and 5 years concentrates the largest number of professionals, at nearly 44%. This indicates that many interpreters gain significant experience in these early years of their careers.

The 5-10 years' experience bracket (17%) represents intermediate experience, with a significant proportion of interpreters having between 5- and 10-years' experience. They form a solid core of experienced professionals.

The most experienced interpreters, with more than 10 years' experience, represent a minority (8%). This phenomenon is due to a number of factors: a shorter working life in the sector and a switch to other professions.

Analysis of these data reveals a professional profile marked by relative youth and a dynamic of renewal. The high proportion of interpreters who are just starting out or who have less than 5 years' experience suggests a growth sector, with a high demand for escort interpreters.

▪ Status of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso

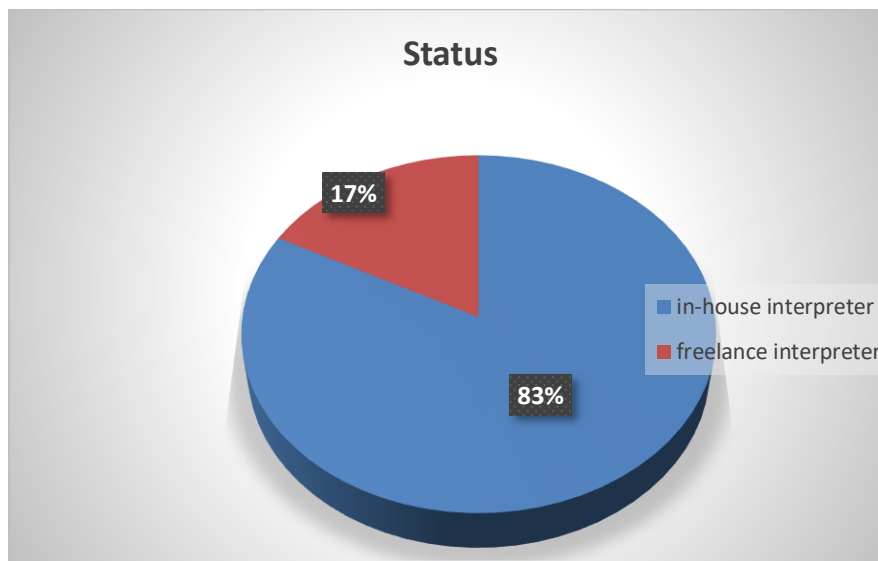


Figure 7: Breakdown of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso by status

The graph above gives us a clear breakdown of the two main types of escort interpreter used in the tourism sector in Burkina Faso. These are in-house interpreters (employed by a company or institution) and freelance interpreters, commonly known as <<Freelancers>>.

In the light of the data in the graph, it appears that the vast majority of them, 83% (around 50 people), use freelance interpreters for their needs. This choice is significant and can be explained by several factors. Freelance interpreters offer greater flexibility in terms of availability and adaptation to the specific needs of each client.

▪ Training in interpretation

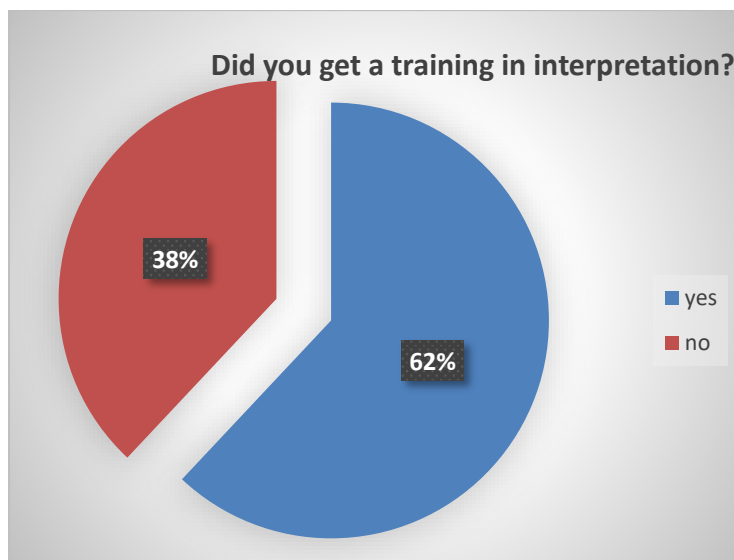


Figure 8: Breakdown of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso according to whether they are trained or not

Figure 8 shows the results for interpreter training in Burkina Faso.

The data show that 38% of escort interpreters have received training in interpreting. This percentage indicates that a less significant proportion of professionals working in this field have skills acquired through specific training.

Conversely, 62% of respondents insisted that they had not had any training in interpreting. This percentage highlights a significant proportion of professionals who practise the profession without having benefited from recognised training.

▪ Training institute in interpretation

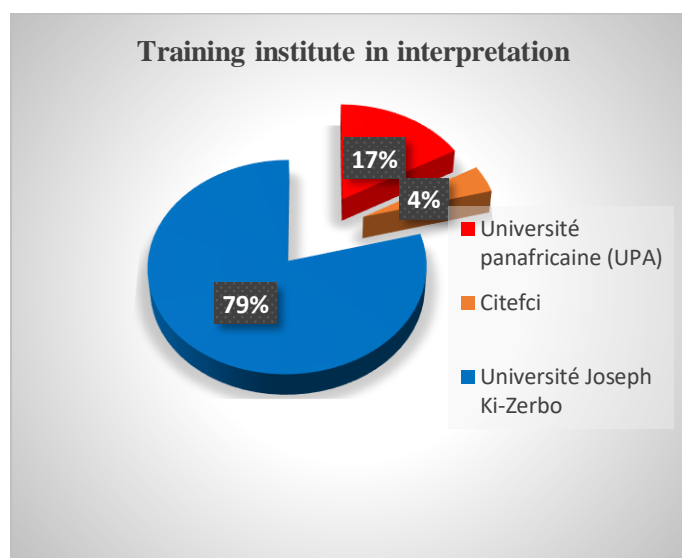


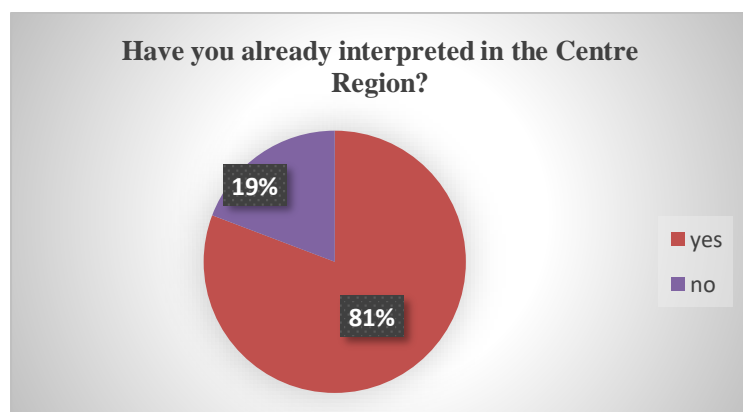
Figure 09: Breakdown of Burkina Faso interpreters by training institute

Graph 9 above provides an overview of the distribution of interpreters in Burkina Faso according to their training institution.

It is clear that Joseph Ki-ZERBO University dominates the training landscape for interpreters in the country, with a market share of 79%. This suggests that this university has positioned itself as a major player in the training of translation and interpreting professionals in Burkina Faso.

CITEFCI and the Pan-African University (UPA) account for a smaller share of the interpreter training market, with 4% and 17% respectively. This can be explained by the fact that there is less training on offer for those wishing to enter the interpreting profession.

▪ Interpreting services in the Centre region



Graph 11: Breakdown of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso concerning their services in the Centre region

Graph 11 above shows that 81% of the service providers surveyed have already provided interpreting services in the Centre region.

This percentage suggests a solid presence of professional interpreters in this region, which is our field of study.

Conversely, only 19% of service providers have not had the opportunity to work in the Centre region. This indicates that there is a minority of interpreters who have not yet offered their services in the Centre region.

Table2: Perception of the practice of escort interpreting in Burkina Faso

S/N	Appreciation	Number of respondents	percentages
1.	Unknown	16	31%
2.	Bad	03	6%
3.	Average	24	46%
4.	Good	09	17%

Table 2 provides an overview of perceptions of the practice of escort interpreting in Burkina Faso.

First of all, it is striking that the majority of escort interpreters (46%) describe the practice as 'average'. This suggests a certain ambivalence of opinion, with neither marked enthusiasm nor categorical rejection predominating. This average perception reflects a complex reality in which the advantages and disadvantages of escort interpreting are perceived in a balanced way. Furthermore, a third of those surveyed, representing 31% of respondents, said they were not familiar with the practice of escort interpreting. This figure highlights the lack of transparency that still surrounds this activity, particularly in terms of regulation. It also highlights the importance of better communication and greater visibility of escort interpreting services in the tourism sector. The "good" and "bad" categories represent minorities. While the positive perception exists with 17% of respondents, it is relatively low. This can be explained by satisfactory personal experiences, recognition of the usefulness of this practice in certain contexts, or adherence to cultural values favourable to mutual assistance. On the other hand, the low proportion of negative perceptions, representing 6% of respondents, is interpreted as a sign that this practice, although it may be criticised, is not systematically rejected.

4.1.2. Roles and responsibilities of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso

Table 3: Breakdown of the interpretation modes most frequently used by escort interpreters in Burkina Faso

S/N	What modes of interpretation do you often use in escort interpreting?	Frequencies	Percentages
1	Consecutive interpretation without notes	37	41%
2	Whispering	16	18%
3	Consecutive interpretation with notes	15	16%
4	Bilateral interpretation	14	15%
5	Sight-Translation	9	10%

	Total	91	100%
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Table 3 gives a clear breakdown of the interpreting methods most frequently used by escort interpreters in Burkina Faso in the course of their work.

The data show that consecutive interpreting without note-taking is by far the most widespread method, accounting for 41% of practices. Chuchotage came second with 18% of occurrences, closely followed by consecutive interpreting with note-taking (16%). Bilateral interpreting and sight translation are used less frequently, accounting for 15% and 10% respectively.

In addition, analysis of these data reveals that escort interpreters in Burkina Faso favour interpreting methods that encourage direct and natural communication. Consecutive interpreting without note-taking is by far the most commonly used method, which underlines the importance of oral language skills in this profession. Chuchotage and bilateral interpreting are also frequently used techniques, demonstrating the adaptability of interpreters to different communication situations.

▪ Professional code of ethics

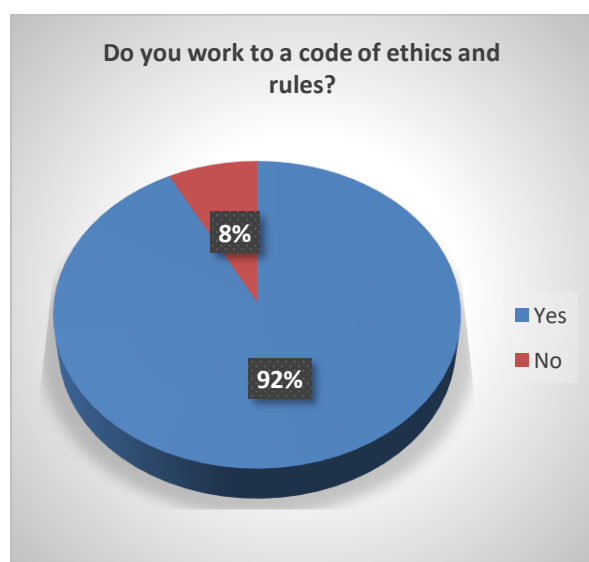


Figure 13: Breakdown of escort interpreters in the tourism sector by adherence to a code of ethics

The results of Graph 13 above show that escort interpreters in Burkina Faso adhere significantly to a code of ethics and rules. Indeed, 92% of respondents indicated that they work in accordance with such a code, while only 8% said they did not. The high rate of 92% suggests a widespread awareness among escort interpreters of the importance of an ethical framework governing their profession. This shows a commitment to providing quality services and maintaining a positive image of their sector. The 8% of interpreters who do not comply with the code of ethics are due to a number of factors, such as a lack of training and awareness of the code, economic pressure to break the rules and a lack of supervision and enforcement of the code.

Table 5: Some ethical rules mentioned by the respondents

Nº	Rules of Professional conduct	Frequencies	Percentages
1	Respect for the clients	42	17,28%
2	Confidentiality	41	16,87%
3	Professionnalism	40	16,46%
4	Honesty	39	16,07%
5	Neutrality	35	14,40%
6	Fidelity	33	13,58%
7	Accountabilty	13	5,34%
	Total	243	100%

The table above provides an overview of the ethical rules to which escort interpreters in Burkina Faso declare they adhere. The data reveal a hierarchy of values and principles that guide their professional practice.

Firstly, respect for the client emerges as the most important value for interpreters, with a score of 17.28%. This suggests a strong customer orientation in the profession, which is essential to ensure tourist satisfaction and promote tourist return.

Confidentiality and professionalism follow close behind, with scores of 16.87% and 16.46% respectively. These values underline the importance of discretion and ethical behaviour in the exercise of the profession.

Honesty (16.07%), neutrality (14.40%) and loyalty (13.58%) round out the top 5 most cited values. These values reinforce the idea of a profession that demands integrity, impartiality and loyalty towards customers and partners.

Finally, accountability, although less frequently cited (5.34%), remains an important value. It underlines the importance of interpreters being accountable and taking responsibility.

In clear terms, the data from this table show that escort interpreters in Burkina Faso are aware of the importance of an ethical framework governing their profession. The values cited reflect a desire to provide quality services, preserve the sector's reputation and contribute to the development of tourism.

▪ **The entity providing the code of ethics**

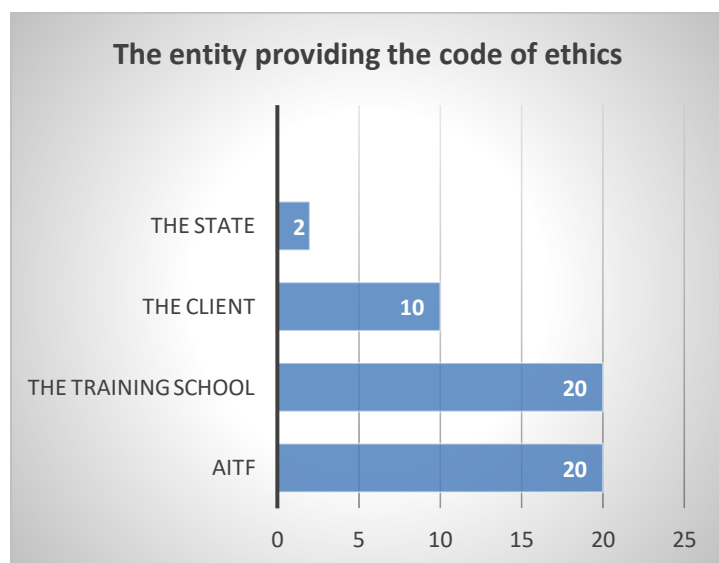


Figure 14: Breakdown of bodies issuing the code of ethics for escort interpreting in Burkina Faso

The graph shows the distribution of opinions as to which body is most likely to issue the code of ethics for escort interpreting in Burkina Faso. The responses are divided between the government, training schools, clients and professional associations such as the Association of Interpreters and Translators of Faso (AITF).

Firstly, training schools came out on top with 40% of responses. This result suggests that many respondents consider that training establishments are best placed to define the ethical and professional standards of the profession. As schools are in direct contact with future interpreters, they would be in a position to pass on values and good practice right from the start of training.

Secondly, professional associations such as the AITF also received a high score of 40%. This result underlines the importance that professionals attach to self-regulation. Associations are often made up of experienced practitioners who know the realities of the field and can therefore draw up a code of ethics tailored to the specific characteristics of the profession, as suggested by Tseng (2021).

Clients, although fewer in number, still accounted for 20% of responses. This result indicates that customers also have a role to play in defining quality standards. Their expectations and needs must be taken into account in drawing up the code of ethics.

And finally, the government scored the lowest, with only 4% of responses. This result can be explained by several factors, such as a mistrust of government intervention in professional affairs, a desire to preserve the autonomy of the profession, or a lack of confidence in the government's ability to draw up a code of ethics tailored to the specific characteristics of the sector.

▪ Having personal relationship with the client



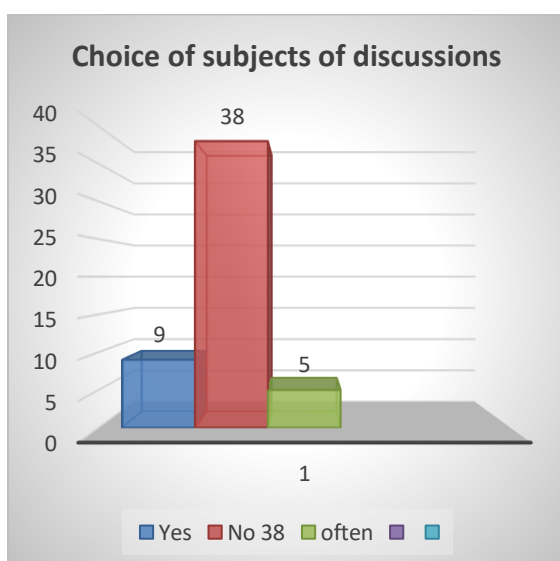
Figure 15: Personal relationship of escort interpreters with clients

Graph 15 shows a binary breakdown of responses to the question of whether escort interpreters in Burkina Faso are allowed to have personal relationships with their clients. The results are categorised into two groups: "Yes" and "No".

From the outset, a significant majority of 58% of respondents indicated that escort interpreters are not allowed to develop personal relationships with their clients. This result suggests a desire to clearly separate the professional and personal dimensions of this activity.

On the other hand, 42% of respondents stated that such relationships are permitted. This figure, although a minority, indicates a degree of flexibility in practices and possible variability depending on the players involved or the context.

▪ Choice of subjects of discussions



Graph 17: Choice of topics for discussion by escort interpreters in the course of their duties

The graph above shows the results of the question aimed at determining whether these professionals actively choose topics for discussion when carrying out their duties.

The results are clear and unequivocal.

An overwhelming majority of the 38 interpreters (around 73%) said that they did not have the opportunity to choose the topics for discussion. This proportion indicates a strong tendency to follow a script or answer pre-established questions, rather than engage in free and spontaneous conversation.

Secondly, a limited number of 9 interpreters (around 17%) stated that they were able to choose the topics of discussion on an occasional basis. This suggests that, in certain contexts or with certain clients, a certain amount of leeway is allowed.

Only 5 interpreters (around 10%) claim to be able to choose the topics of discussion systematically. This minority proportion indicates that freedom of initiative is rather limited in this profession.

▪ **Existence of a professional association for interpreters**

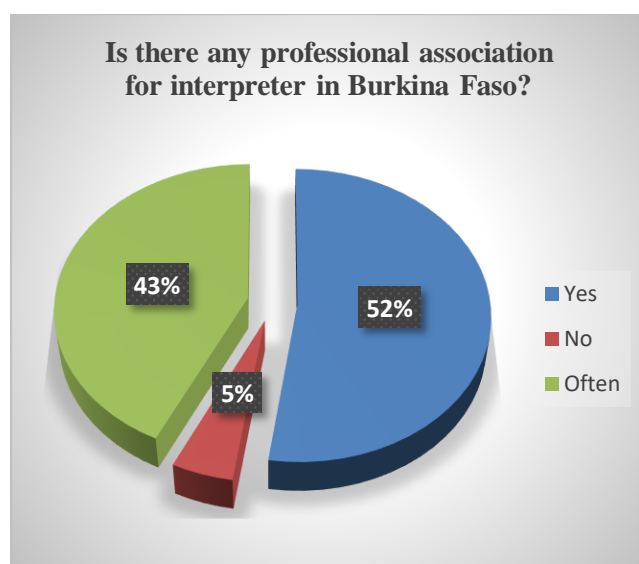


Figure 18: Breakdown of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso according to their awareness of the existence of a professional association for escort interpreters

Figure 18 shows that knowledge of the existence of a professional association representing escort interpreters in Burkina Faso is relatively diffuse.

First of all, we have an undecided majority in the response grid. The fact that 43% of respondents said "maybe" suggests a degree of uncertainty about the existence of such an association. This could be due to a number of factors, such as a lack of targeted information on the subject, low visibility of the association, or unsystematic membership of the association.

Secondly, partial awareness of the existence of an association was revealed in the responses. The 52% who said they were aware of the existence of the association represented a significant proportion.

Finally, a margin of ignorance on the part of the respondents fills in the gaps. Although a minority, the percentage of those who are not at all aware of the existence of the association is significant (5%). This underlines the need to step up communication about this structure and its missions.

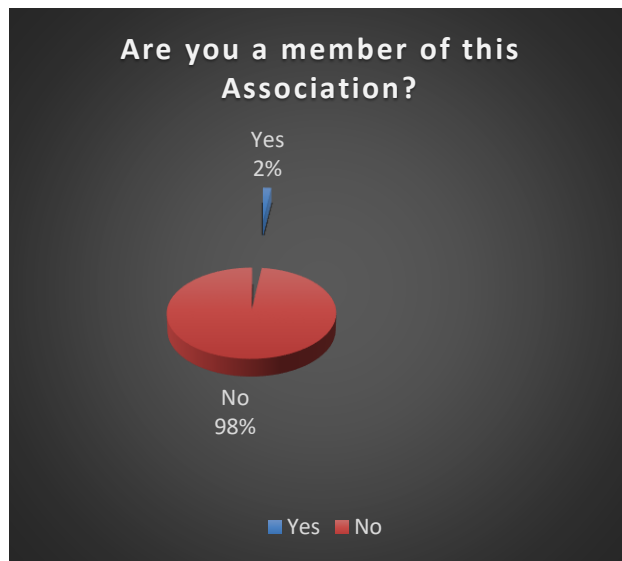


Figure 19: Breakdown of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso by association membership

Figure 19 shows a significant disparity in membership of the Association of Interpreters and Translators of Faso among escort interpreters working in the tourism sector in Burkina Faso.

In fact, 98% of the interpreters questioned said that they were not members of the Association of Interpreters and Translators of Faso (AITF), while a tiny 2% said that they were.

In other words, membership of the AITF is extremely low among escort interpreters. This suggests a certain lack of interest in or knowledge of the association and the benefits it could offer.

▪ **Difference between a tour guide and an escort interpreter**

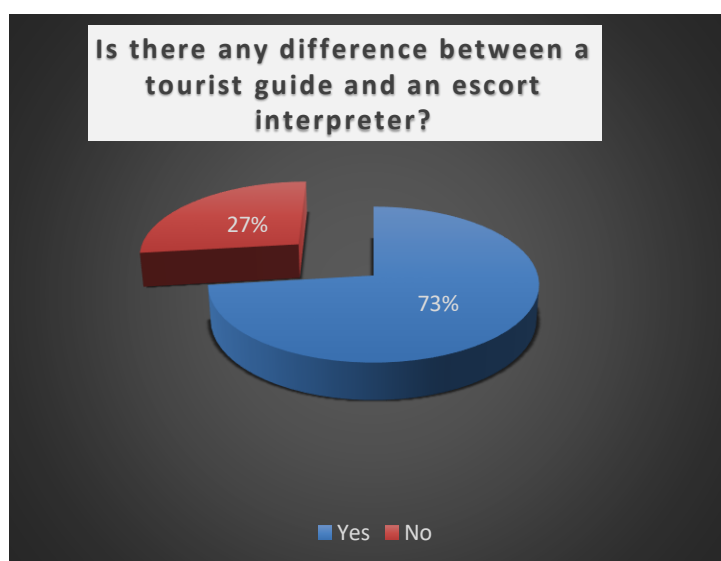


Figure 21: Escort interpreters' perception of their roles in relation to tourist guides

This diagram shows how escort interpreters perceived their role in relation to that of a tourist guide. The question asked was whether they made a distinction between their role and that of a tourist guide.

The results are clear and unequivocal.

- 73% of escort interpreters felt that there was a difference between their role and that of a tourist guide. This significant percentage suggests that a majority of escort interpreters have a clear perception of their distinct role in the tourism sector. They probably recognise that their language skills, knowledge of business protocols and ability to facilitate cross-cultural communication differentiate them from tour guides, who have more of a storytelling and facilitation role.
- 27% of escort interpreters do not make a clear distinction between the two roles. This lower percentage indicates that a minority of escort interpreters might perceive overlaps between their duties and those of tourist guides. It is possible that these interpreters also conduct guided tours or that their work involves some form of tourist escorting.

▪ Other roles played by escort interpreters

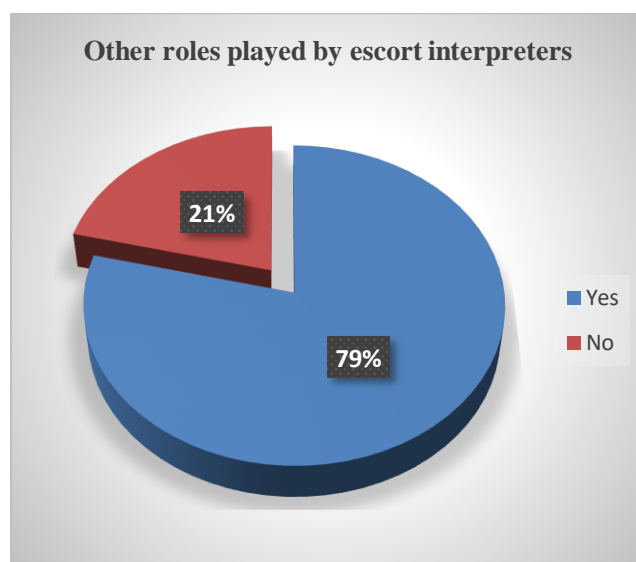


Figure 22: Additional roles of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso

The pie chart above clearly illustrates the answers given by 52 Burkinabe escort interpreters who were questioned about performing additional roles outside their main function. The results are as follows:

- 79% of the escort interpreters questioned said that they took on extra roles in addition to interpreting. This significant percentage indicates that the majority of professional interpreters in Burkina Faso have a wider remit than simply interpreting.
- Only 21% of respondents limit themselves exclusively to interpreting. Although this figure is a minority, it nonetheless highlights the existence of a category of interpreters who concentrate their activity on language translation.

4.2. Presentation, analysis and interpretation of data collected during interviews with tourism authorities

In addition to the questionnaires and focus groups, we also conducted interviews with six (06) tourism authorities in Burkina to gain a better understanding of the situation of escort interpreters. The interviews took the form of written conversations and telephone calls. The order of the questions was not strictly adhered to, as during the interview we allowed the interviewees to express themselves freely after each question. As a result, some interviewees answered several questions at once during the conversation. However, the results of the interviews have been classified according to the research questions for orderly presentation and interpretation, as shown in Table 7 below.

4.2.1. Profile of escort interpreters

Responses from interviewees	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
The escort interpreters are all of Burkina Faso nationality	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
The escort interpreters are not trained, but they do have knowledge of some foreign languages.	X	X	X	X	X	X	6
The escort interpreters are graduates in fields other than interpreting.	X	X	X	X	X	X	6

Six officials were interviewed: two from the Burkina Faso National Tourist Office, two from the National Museum and two members of the SIAO organising committee.

They all confirmed that there were no specific regulations governing interpreters.

On the other hand, training for tourist guides is offered by the University of Gaoua in the South-West region, the Joseph Ki-ZERBO University in the Centre region and the national parks. As far as the code of ethics is concerned, there is none for escort interpreters, but they apply the one for tourist guides.

They all mentioned that each tourist agent defines roles and responsibilities.

In addition, the data collected during the interviews was consistent with that obtained from the analysis of the questionnaires.

With regard to the identity of the interpreter, the interviewees indicated that escort interpreters are generally graduates who have been trained in other disciplines but who know at least two languages. The interviewees also stressed that some bilingual guides have taken tourist guide courses. Others are language teachers in schools or have lived abroad.

4.2.2. Roles and responsibilities of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso

With regard to the roles of escort interpreters, although they could not really distinguish their roles and responsibilities from those of tourist guides and bilingual interpreters, all six interviewees stressed that they played an essential role in marketing cultural products and assisting tourists in any way they could.

The interviewees indicated that they did not really differentiate between bilingual guides and other guides who do not speak foreign languages.

They did, however, recognise that bilingual guides are interpreters.

However, it is important to note that all the escort interpreters made a clear distinction between themselves and the other guides, in particular because they play an intermediary role. They communicate better with visitors.

5. Discussions of the results

The first objective of this study, which was to determine the profiles of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso, was achieved. It was established that interpreters in the tourism industry are mainly bilingual and have no formal training in interpreting. Some of them have other professions such as teaching, tourist guiding, etc.

However, although most of them learned foreign languages at high school, university or abroad, it has to be said that all the escort interpreters working in the tourism sector in Burkina Faso are Burkinabè.

furthermore, it was discovered that in the Centre region, escort interpreting is not only carried out by untrained bilingual guides. It is also provided by trained conference interpreters who are occasionally employed. We can therefore conclude that escort interpreting is provided both by untrained bilingual guides, who make up the majority, and by few professional interpreters.

The second objective, which was to determine the roles and responsibilities of interpreters in the tourism sector in Burkina Faso, was achieved. Interpreters' roles are defined by their employers. There is no body that regulates activities related to escort interpreting, nor is there an association that implements specific regulations for escort interpreters. We noted that interpreters in the field of tourism regularly mentioned translation, tour guiding and event organisation as integral parts of their duties. We also noted that the absence of a well-defined framework for the roles of interpreters is indicative of a lack of organisation. Unlike other contexts, such as court interpreting, where only interpreting roles can be defended, it is difficult to suggest that escort interpreters in the tourism context should only perform interpreting roles. Freelance interpreters stick strictly to interpreting to a certain extent, but the same cannot be said for bilingual tourist guides who are not just escort interpreters.

As far as ethics are concerned, we have unfortunately noted that there is no code of ethics to guide the work of escort interpreters. This is why, in the absence of common rules and regulations, individual interpreters seem to do what they think is appropriate. Moreover, this is what emerges from their responses concerning certain aspects of the code of ethics. The interpreters' role is often limited to guiding tourists, which does not allow them to understand the difficulties they encounter as escort interpreters.

6. Conclusion

All in all, this study has taken a close look at the profile, roles and responsibilities of escort interpreters in Burkina Faso. The study objectives were achieved. Based on the work consulted on the practice of interpreting in tourism contexts elsewhere and the results collected from the questionnaires and interviews, recommendations can be made for improving the practice of escort interpreting in general and for making Burkina Faso an attractive destination for foreigners through effective interpreting services in particular.

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