

Labels on Translation Output

**Ready for early adopters
who care about
transparency and
consumer protection**

(April 2025)



by Alan Melby

Chair of FIT North America
President of LTAC Global

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Recent presentations about Labels leading up to this April 2025 slide deck:

I presented the Labels project to various colleagues in Europe between November 18th and 29th, 2024, starting in Luxembourg, continuing to France, Switzerland, and Austria, ending up in Hungary.

Why Hungary? I am the chair of FIT (www.fit-ift.org) North America, which is the regional center of FIT that includes Canada, Mexico, and the United States, and was invited by the chair of FIT Europe to present about Labels at their conference in Budapest.

This April 2025 presentation is based on the November 2024 FIT Europe presentation. Prior to that, I gave a webinar on August 23, 2024, for members of the American Translators Association (ATA), a member of FIT North America and made presentations at the September 2024 meeting of AMTA (<https://amtaweb.org/>) in Chicago (USA) and at the October 2024 meeting of ASTM (www.astm.org) F43.03 (translation-related standards) in Portland, Oregon.

Roadmap

- ASTM and labels (a standards-based approach)
- Key distinction: Verified vs. Un-Verified
- Labels on Translation Output: Who Should Care?
- Factors: Process, Qualifications, Accountability
- Next: Adoption; Education; Visibility

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This Roadmap will give you an idea of what we will be discussing in this presentation.

- ASTM and labels (a standards-based approach)

Labels on translation output are a form of consumer protection. For the labels to be easily recognized by consumers, that is, end users of translation, they must be standardized. For this, we have turned to a standards body called ASTM International.

- Key distinction: Verified vs. Un-Verified

After much discussion, it has been agreed that the key distinction needed in labels is whether translation has been verified by a professional translator. Verification is used broadly to include self-checking, editing of machine output, and revision of the work of another translator. The labels are Professionally Verified Translation and Un-Verified Translation.

- Labels on Translation Output: Who Should Care?

Three stakeholder groups should care about these labels: (1) consumers, especially in a high-stakes scenario; (2) providers and publishers of translation output, and (3) system developers who must decide what training material to use.

- Factors: Process, Qualifications, Accountability

There are three factors behind the labels: (1) the process used to produce the translation, (2) the qualifications of the translators who are involved, and (3) the person or organizations, if any, who takes responsibility for correspondence errors in the translation.

- Next: Adoption; Education; Visibility

What comes next? (1) We need some early adopters; (2) We need to educate the public about risks associated with translation errors and about the labels; (3) We can use the labels to increase the visibility of translation as a profession.

ASTM standard F2575-2025

Pre-production phase includes *What is a qualified professional translator?* and *How to develop specifications*.

Labels are part of **post-production**. Updated labels were anticipated by a reference to the Tranquility GLO page in the Related Reading already in 2023. Update ballot ends 2025 April 9th.

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ASTM F2575 is a comprehensive standard for both requesters and providers of translation services.

F2575 includes six areas of competence that determine whether a translator is a qualified professional. See <https://www.tranquility.info/whats-a-qualified-translator/> for a list of those six areas. These six areas are compatible with those described in ISO 17100.

F2575-2023 is very comprehensive, but for this presentation we want to focus on two main parts of a translation project: pre-production and post-production. Labels are introduced in the post-production phase as a means of risk mitigation for translation consumers.

The “GLO” page cited in the Related Reading section of the November 2023 edition of the standard anticipated updates: <https://www.tranquility.info/GLO/>

ASTM F2089-2024

Covers interpreting services, where the output is spoken.

No mention of automatic interpreting in the latest edition. The possible label AIGI is under discussion.

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F2089 was updated in 2024:
<https://www.astm.org/f2089-24.html>

SAFE-AI task force provides guidelines for the use of automatic interpreting services.
See <https://safeaitf.org/>

The end-user of interpreting services should be aware of whether the service is being provided by a human or a

machine. One possible label is
AIGI (AI-generated
Interpreting).

Verified vs. Unverified

Key Distinction

Verified means

“produced and self-checked” or
“checked for correspondence”
by a qualified professional translator

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What is at stake for consumers of translation output? It depends on the scenario. Whenever they look at a translation, the consumer needs to ask themselves : Does it matter if there are gross errors not visible to me because I can't read the source text? Can I trust the translation, or should I exercise caution?

The key distinction provided by the translation consumer labels is whether the output has been “verified” (produced and then self-checked or otherwise produced and then checked by a qualified professional translator). But why should verification matter and who benefits from it?

The underlying assumption is that qualified professional translators are best able to verify a translation. Here, verification can include self-revision, revision of a translation done by another translator, or post-editing of raw machine output.

The *labels* as of January 2025

**Professionally Verified
Translation**

and

Un-Verified Translation

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At the end of Phase One of our survey to identify replacements for the 2023 labels Bilingually Reviewed Translation and Unedited Machine Translation, we came up with the updated labels Professionally Verified Translation and Un-Verified Translation.

Possible non-language-specific icons (aka logos) are under discussion.

Protecting the “Verified” label

**The mark PVTQ is a
certification mark;
*it is not an acronym***

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In October 2024, we received the results of an extensive search regarding the wordmark PVT. Unfortunately, it can probably not be protected in the area of translation services.

A lively discussion at the October 30, 2024, meeting of ASTM F43 in Portland, Oregon, resulted in a decision to add a Q to the end of PVT in the application to the US Patent and Trademark Office. Our trademark attorney indicates that it is likely that the wordmark PVTQ can be protected as a certification mark.

Informally, PVT will probably be used. In formal situations, the wordmark PVTQ will be used—the Q indicates quality because a professional translator has verified that the agreed-on specifications have been met—with a small “tm” after it, to indicate that a request has been submitted for it to become a registered certification mark.

Who should care about labels?

1. **Consumers (i.e, end users),** who are guided by the labels, especially in a high-stakes scenario;
2. **Providers, both individual translators and organizations, and publishers of translation output;**
3. **System developers, who can use the labels as metadata to select training data.**

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All three stakeholder groups win when standardized labels are use on translation output:

Standardized labels are a win for **consumers** of translation output. The label PVTQ should inspire confidence. The label UVT (or a label indicating that the translation as has been generated by AI) suggests that caution should be exercised before making a decision based on a translation.

Labels are a win for providers and publishers of translation because they allow for transparency. They justify pricing procedures. A professionally verified translation is more expensive, and it is worth it.

Indicating that the translation has not been verified is a type of disclaimer.

Overall, labels are a component of risk management.

Labels can also benefit developers of systems that translate automatically, based on training data. If the labels are part of the metadata associated with a translation, then professionally verified translations can be included when training a system, and un-verified translations can be excluded. Obviously, that begs the question of what to do with un-labeled translations, but you have to start if you are ever going to get anywhere.

Diving into the

Three Factors Behind Transparency

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There are three factors in an ASTM F2575 label. See next slide.

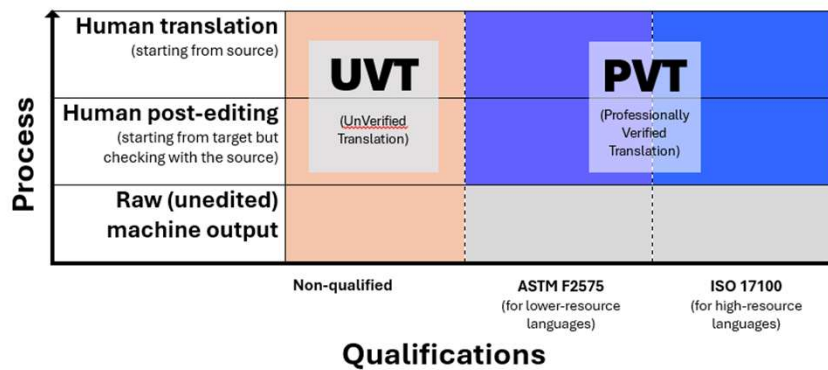
(1) Process

(2) Qualifications

(3) Accountability

The first two factors are presented visually in the following chart, originally created by Arle Lommel.

Process and Qualifications



There are three main processes, each with possible variations, and three situations regarding a professional's qualification: not verified by a human or verified by a non-qualified human, meets ASTM's or ISO's criteria.

Accountability

Who takes *ownership* of the translation?
Professional Verification includes accountability
Un-Verified translation, not usually

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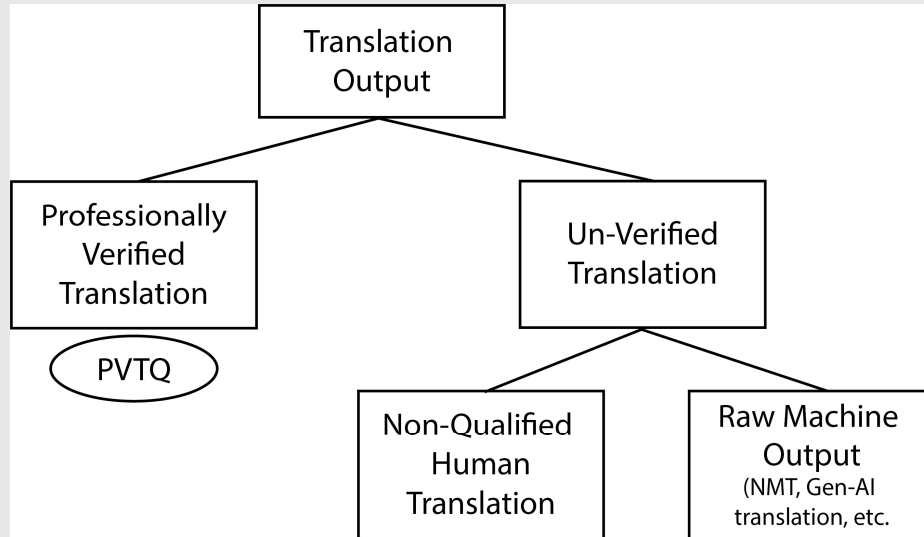
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The third factor, **accountability**, ensures that the publisher, whether an individual or an organization, has taken ownership of the work and its correspondence with the source language content, according to the agreed-on specifications. Correspondence focuses on how well the solutions found in the translation reflect the intended message within the situation for which the content will be used, i.e., the use case.

In the case of AI, such as GenAI, raw machine translation, and translations performed by non-qualified individuals, who takes ownership of any issues that may arise? Probably no one, but that must be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Subtypes of Translation Output combining *process* and *qualifications*



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This tree diagram emphasizes that Un-Verified translation includes both raw machine output and output where only a non-qualified translator is involved.

Verification assumes that a qualified professional translator is taking responsibility of correspondence between source and target texts according to agreed-on specifications.

What's next?

**Lights on (adoption by
providers and publishers)**

**Camera (consumers start
seeing the labels in use)**

Action ! (ball gathers speed)

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What comes next for the labels Professionally Verified Translation and Un-Verified Translation? Adoption by a few organizations that publish translations.

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There are three stakeholder groups: consumers, providers & publishers, and system developers.

The Labels team believes that the labels are ready for some early adopters who care about transparency and consumer protection to start using them.

According to your stakeholder group

- 1) Publishers: Start using PVTQ™ on professionally verified translations made available to consumers.
- 2) Providers of translation services: Start using PVTQ™ on what you deliver to requesters.
- 3) Anyone who cares about the future of the profession: Send me examples of errors in UVT that could cause harm.

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With which stakeholder group do you most closely identify?

Educating the general public

**The label
Professionally
Verified
Translation
is a starting point for education.**

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Once the labels start appearing on a few translations, there can be a campaign to educate the public their importance and how to use them. And how to approach publishers to insist that they be used.

Visibility for the Profession

A desirable side-effect of labels could be increased visibility for translation as a profession.

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In the age of AI, many people are wondering whether humans are needed for translation anymore.

Even if 99 percent of all translation produced and consumed on a given day is raw machine output (according to Kirti Vashee's study), there are still use cases where a professional is needed. It is a matter of risk management. What possible harm could arise from the correspondence errors in a translation? Much!

The label PVT (Professionally Verified Translation) makes the profession more visible. It serves as a starting point for educating requesters about when they need a translation by a qualified professional translator; and when other types of translation, including raw machine output and translation involving non-qualified persons, can be used without excessive risk.

www.tranquility.info
(Status of Labels)



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Please check this webpage from time to time for the current status of the Labels project!

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You are welcome to send comments directly to me:

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especially if you are willing to get involved in the Labels project. It will take many dedicated people to get the labels widely implemented, so that one or the other (or an AI-generated label) starts to appear on most translation output.

In the meantime, the charactermark PVTQ has been submitted to the USPTO to become a registered certification mark.

It is not accidental that the presentation by Michel Simard was scheduled to be in the same session at AMTA 2025 as this presentation. The two presenters have interacted and consider their efforts complementary.

The focus of the Labels project is getting the label Professionally Verified Translation used. Formally, the certification mark is PVTQ™.

Implementing the label benefits all stakeholders, including professional translators.