

Labels on Translation Output

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

(July 2025)



by Alan Melby

Chair of FIT North America
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Recent presentations about Labels leading up to this July 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, and 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 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

- Labels on Translation Output (a standards-based approach)
- Key distinction: Verified vs. Un-Verified
- Who Should Care about labels?
- 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.

- 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. There is a Labels working group within ASTM International, and the labels described here have been introduced to ISO Technical Committee 37.

- Key distinction: Verified vs. Un-Verified

After much discussion, it has been agreed that the key distinction needed in labels is whether the 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 materials to use for systems that will translate automatically.

- 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 organization, 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; and (3) we should use the labels to increase the visibility of translation as a profession.

For labels on translation to be maximally useful, they should be standardized

There are two global standards bodies that publish standards regarding translation projects:

- *ISO and*
- *ASTM International*

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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 the post-production phase. Labels are introduced in the post-production phase as a means of risk mitigation for translation consumers and transparency on the part of providers and publishers.

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

At the 2025 meeting of ISO Technical Committee 37, Subcommittee 5, it was proposed that a technical report on labels should be developed.

Verified vs. Unverified

Key Distinction

Verified that it meets agreed-on specifications

Verification includes production and self-checking, revision by another translator, or bilingually editing, 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 for correspondence between source and target texts).

No matter what exact process is used, verification includes making sure the translation meets the agreed-on specifications.

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
(everything else)**

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At the end of Phase One of our 2024 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 icons (aka logos) are under discussion.

Protecting the “Verified” label

**The mark PVTQ is a
certification mark;
*it is not an acronym, but each
letter suggests something***

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In October 2024, we received the results of an extensive search regarding the character mark 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, the label “Professionally Verified Translation” will probably be used. In formal situations, the wordmark **PVTQ** will be used, where:

The P is for “qualified **Professional** translator”.

The V is for “**Verified**”.

The T is for “**Translation**”

The Q indicates that it is a **Quality** translation because it meets agreed-on specifications.

A small “tm” can be placed after PVTQ, to indicate that an application 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. And 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 somewhere if you are ever going to get anywhere.

Three Factors Behind a Label

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There are three factors in a label on translation output.
See next slide.

(1) Process

(2) Qualifications

(3) Accountability

The process resulting in translation output can be anything from human translation, which involves starting from a source text, to fully automatic translation, where there is no human involvement. Professionally Verified Translation requires involvement of a qualified human and acceptance of responsibility for correspondence errors in the translation output.

Accountability

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

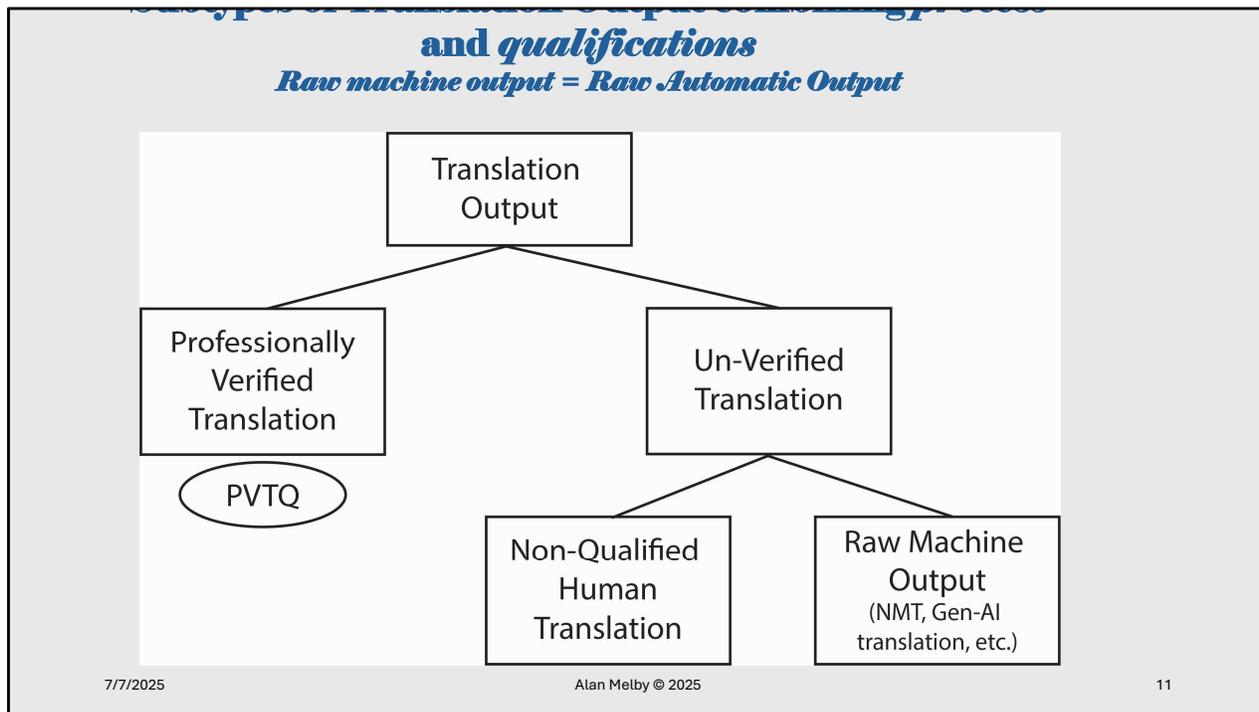
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The third factor, **accountability**, ensures that the publisher, whether an individual or an organization, has taken ownership of the work and its correspondence with the source language content, according to the agreed-on specifications. Correspondence 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. Accountability begins with an individual translator, who attaches the label Professionally Verified Translation to their work before submitting it. This begins a chain of trust and accountability all the way to the consumer.

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.



This tree diagram emphasizes that an Un-Verified translation includes both raw machine output (aka raw automatic 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.

Note that in raw automatic output could have two labels, Un-Verified Translation and another label to indicate that it is generated by AI. That second label would also be used on generated images, sounds, and text other than translation.

What's next?

Lights (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 individual translators and a few organizations that publish translations.

A pending action item for the Labels team is to agree on a logo to go along with the label and the certification mark.

Ready for early adopters who care about *transparency* and *consumer protection* in the context of risk management

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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.

Action items according to your stakeholder group

- 1) Publishers: Start using the label *Professionally Verified Translation* when applicable on translations made available to consumers.
- 2) Qualified providers of translation services: Start using the label on what you deliver to requesters.
- 3) Anyone who cares about the future of the profession: Send me examples of errors in UVTs 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 on their importance and how to use them. And how to approach publishers to insist that they be used. The context of the labels is risk management, but the general public will probably think in terms of whether they are making an important decision without being able to read the source text and verify the translation for themselves.

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 correspondence errors in a translation? Much!

The label 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 automatic 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 the Status of Labels webpage

(<https://www.tranquility.info/status-of-labels/>)

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 character mark 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. The certification mark PVTQ™ is for ensuring that the label is used appropriately.

Implementing the label benefits all stakeholders, including professional translators.