

The Proof of the Pudding Is in the Eating or Pudding as a Translation Problem

The paper draws attention to the translation problems caused by a wide range of semantic reference of the English word 'pudding', which is an important element of the British gastronomic discourse. The authors look into the history of the word to understand its original reference, make a list of the most common names of puddings, grouping them into categories according to the mode of preparation, provide their available Ukrainian translations and, in case there is no translation available or the existing one is not adequate, offer their translations.

Key words: pudding, translation, semantic ambiguity, cultural memory, gastronomic discourse

What image pops up in the mind of Ukrainians when they see or hear the word *pudding*? In most cases, something like the images we get in Google when we type in this word – a dessert of a soft, spongy, or thick creamy consistency, a common feature of today's dessert menus. Do the British people have the same idea of a pudding as the Ukrainians? Hardly, as with the British people, the range of images will be much wider – this is easily proved by the example sentences illustrating the use of the word *pudding* in English-to-English dictionaries. En.oxforddictionaries.com, for instance, may confuse learners of English with such examples as: *What's for pudding?* or: *And by the time we reached pudding - some rapidly melting ice cream - even the weather seemed to be improving.* or: *I'd love to wash out the intestines and use them to make puddings and things like that.* Reading sentences like this, a smart student of English will realize that pudding is something more than a pastry or cake or custard and, as a first step, might want to check the translation of this word. English-Ukrainian paper and online dictionaries will mostly offer two translations, *пудинг* and *запиканка*. Surely, the transcoded *пудинг* is the easiest way to get rid of the curious student, but does it really help to understand what the British pudding is? Our smart student may take a step further and check the meaning of the Ukrainian match *пудинг* in a Ukrainian explanatory dictionary. The Academic Explanatory Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language in 11 volumes, which is now available online (*sum.in.ua*) gives the following definition of *пудинг*: «запиканка з сиру, м'яса, крупи і т. ін. з доданням яєць, молока, прянощів». At this stage, the inquisitive Ukrainian student will certainly understand that there is still much to learn about puddings and will probably start a real research on the net, only to get more baffled than before in the end – on the Internet we are confronted with dozens of various kinds of puddings and recipes for them. Another “eye-opener” about puddings is that many of them are not really baked, which makes Ukrainian translation «запиканка» too blunt. At this point we have enough ground to say that the English word *pudding* is a translation problem, caused by its semantic ambiguity rooted in the rich history of this culinary phenomenon in the British culture. The British themselves have always succeeded in busting pudding stereotypes, taking joy in inventing new kinds of puddings. A bright example can be found in Lewis Carroll's “Through the Looking-Glass”, where the Knight is telling Alice about the pudding he invented (Chapter 8):

‘And yet it was a very clever pudding to invent.’

‘What did you mean it to be made of?’ Alice asked, hoping to cheer him up, for the poor Knight seemed quite low-spirited about it.

‘It began with blotting paper,’ the Knight answered with a groan.

‘That wouldn't be very nice, I'm afraid – ’

‘Not very nice *alone*,’ he interrupted, quite eagerly: ‘but you've no idea what a difference it makes mixing it with other things – such as gunpowder and sealing-wax.’

The deeper we plunge into the history of the British pudding the less absurd this dialogue begins to look. Obviously, the British knew what they were talking about when they coined the proverb “The proof of the pudding is in the eating”.

In this paper we aim to address the translation problem of the British pudding by solving the following tasks: firstly, we will look into the history of the British pudding to understand the original reference of the word, secondly, we will make a list of the most common names of puddings and analyze their referential meaning (making a complete list, however, seems to be a problematic undertaking in view of the endless varieties and brands of puddings circulating the globe today), finally, we will provide the available Ukrainian translations and, in case there is no translation available or the existing one looks unsatisfactory in view of the original reference or for purely linguistic reasons, we will offer our translations. The availability of Ukrainian translations was checked in two Ukrainian-English dictionaries compiled under the general supervision of Ye. Gorot' [1; 2] and two generally used online translation tools – ABBYY Lingvo Live and Google Translator.

The theoretical background of this research centers around the postulate of general linguistics about the direct connection between words and cultural and historical experience of the language speakers [3, p. 445] and the concept of the cultural memory of a language unit understood as a set of associations evoked by a language unit in its current meaning, which have roots in its earlier use [4, p. 208]. V. Kulykova and M. Kovalchuk, who researched menus as a type of gastronomic discourse, point out that to understand the full gastronomic picture of another people, it is often not sufficient to translate a culinary name. Translators have to resort to various transformations, commentaries and adaptations to deliver the true meaning of the original. They also argue that in many cases transcription as a method of translating a name is used unreasonably, as the transcribed name of a dish can be well known in the target culture under a different name or may have its analog in the target language [5, p. 176-177].

In the case of pudding, it is tempting to “let the sleeping dogs lie” and make do with the well established transcoded *пудинг*. But, as we have already shown, this is often not possible in specific contexts, and a conscientious translator has

no choice but to “wake up the dogs” from time to time to deliver what is expected of the translator – the adequate understanding [6, p. 195].

Following Andriy Bogachov’s advice [7, p. 313], let us, as the first step, make sure that we correctly understand the phenomenon under study in the environment of the English culture. For this purpose, we have to go back to the origins of the word *pudding* in English.

A New Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles dates the earliest written registration of the word *pudding* back to the beginning of the 14th century, when the word referred to “the stomach or one of the entrails of a pig, sheep, or other animal, stuffed with a mixture of minced meat, suet, oatmeal, seasoning, etc., boiled and kept till needed; a kind of sausage” [8, p. 1564]. The second basic meaning, “a preparation of food of a soft or moderately firm consistency, in which the ingredients, animal or vegetable, are either mingled in a farinaceous basis (chiefly of flour), or are enclosed in a farinaceous ‘crust’, and cooked by boiling or steaming” [8, p. 1565], was registered much later, in the 16th century, with the dictionary entry adding that “preparations of batter, milk and eggs, rice, sago, tapioca, and other farinaceous substances, suitably seasoned, and cooked by baking, are now also called puddings” [8, p. 1565]. The dictionary further comments: “The earliest use ... apparently implied the boiling of the composition in a bag or cloth (pudding-bag or -cloth) ... but the term has been extended to similar preparation otherwise boiled or steamed, and finally, to things baked, so that its meaning and application are now rather indefinite” [8, p. 1565]. From the present-day perspective we can add that the semantic indefiniteness of *pudding* has been taken to extremes in British English, where the word can refer to any “sweet dish served at the end of a meal” [9, p. 1325] – hence, “What do we have for pudding?”

The analysis of dictionary definitions points to three basic types of pudding as a specific dish (we leave aside the use of this word as a general synonym to dessert): 1) the oldest one, a kind of meat sausage; 2) a dish made of mixture of flour, fat, etc., with meat and/or vegetables inside; 3) a sweet dish.

Now that we better understand the reference of the word as a kind of food, let us look at the most common names of pudding and their translations into Ukrainian.

1. Pudding as a kind of meat sausage.

There are three venerable kinds of British pudding in this category, black pudding, hog’s pudding and white pudding.

Black pudding, also called blood sausage, is “a type of sausage, usually very dark in colour, that is made from pig’s blood, fat, and grain” [10].

Hog’s pudding refers to “the entrail of a hog, variously stuffed, according to locality, with a mixture of oatmeal, suet, tripe, etc., or of flour, currants, and spice” [11, p. 328].

White pudding is “any of several light-colored sausages: such as a) a mixture of meat (as heart, lungs, liver, or muscle) ground with beef suet or pork fat, mixed with bread crumbs, herbs, onion, and spices, stuffed into sausage casings, and fried or broiled fresh, b) a mixture of chopped pork fat and oatmeal seasoned with onion, salt, and pepper, stuffed into sausage casings, and cooked fresh” [12].

The Ukrainian matches for these three kinds of pudding are given in Table 1.

Table 1

English name	Gorot’	ABBY Lingvo Live	Google Translator	Our translation
black pudding	кров’янка	кров’яна ковбаса	чорний пудинг	кров’янка, кров’яна ковбаса
hog’s pudding	-	свинячий пудинг (ковбасний виріб)	свинячий пудинг	свиняча ковбаса
white pudding	-	-	білий пудинг	вівсяна ковбаса, круп’яна ковбаса

As seen from Table 1, only black pudding has a well-established Ukrainian counterpart, *кров’янка*, a blood sausage still loved by many Ukrainians, especially the older generation. The other two kinds of pudding are translated by ABBYY Lingvo and Google as *пудинг*, whereas it is obviously more adequate to translate them as *ковбаса*.

2. Pudding as a dish made of mixture of flour, fat, etc., with meat and/or vegetables inside

In this category, the most well-known types of pudding are Yorkshire pudding, Sussex pudding, steak (or steak and kidney) pudding, fish pudding, under-roast pudding, dripping pudding, potato pudding, pease pudding and curate’s pudding.

Yorkshire pudding is “puffy bread dish made from a batter of eggs, flour, and milk that is baked in meat drippings” [12].

Sussex pudding, known since the early 19th century, is “plain flour-and-water dough, boiled. An accompaniment for roast meats” [13].

Steak pudding is “a double-crust suet pastry case filled with beef mince or chunks in gravy, steamed. Earlier versions use steak pieces” [13]. Steak and kidney pudding, besides beef, includes pieces of kidney.

Fish pudding is a historical dish, which in the past was cooked by boiling fish chunks, with seasoning and onions, in paste [13].

Under-roast pudding is also now a thing of the past, mainly because of the technology of its cooking. It used to be “a simple flour batter – occasionally with spices – cooked in front of the roasting-fire, under the meat, so that it collects drips of meat fat and juices as it cooks” [13]. Similarly to Yorkshire and Sussex puddings, under-roast pudding was

served as an accompaniment to the meat it was cooked under. In fact, under-roast pudding is considered to be the precursor of modern Yorkshire pudding.

Dripping pudding, also a historical food artifact, was “batter of eggs, dripping, sugar, cream, flour and dried fruit, baked in cups” [13]. This pudding was made with melted fat that drips from roasting meat. Though having much in common with the under-roast pudding, the dripping pudding was made from the reserved fat and meat juices, and did not require meat roasted above it.

Potato pudding, also historical, was actually mashed potato (probably sweet potato in earlier recipes) with sugar, spices, etc., baked and served either as a separate dish or as accompaniment to meats [13].

Pease pudding refers to “a near-solid cooked mix of boiled split peas, usually including yellow or Carlin peas, water, salt and spices, often cooked with a bacon or ham joint. Sometimes bound with egg or mashed potato” [13].

Curate’s pudding is a kind of potato pudding, “any of several forms of easily-made pudding, most notably a baked sweetened potato confection, presumably named as being suitable for impoverished and inexperienced bachelors such as curates” [13].

With the exception of the reputable Yorkshire pudding, Ukrainian translations of the names of puddings in this category are difficult to find. The available translations alongside our suggestions are given in Table 2.

Table 2

English name	Gorot’	ABBY Lingvo Live	Google Translator	Our translation
Yorkshire pudding	пиріг із збитого тіста (з куском смаженого м’яса*)	йоркширський пудинг (пиріг з бездріжджового тіста, запечений в соку м’яса, що смажить над ним*)	йоркширський пудинг	йоркширський пудинг (пиріг, що випікається із кляру, і, як правило, подається до м’ясного блюда)
Sussex pudding	-	-	-	сусекський пудинг (виріб з прісного тіста, що вариться або готується на пару і, як правило, подається до м’ясних блюд)
steak (or steak and kidney) pudding	-	-	-	м’ясний пиріг
fish pudding	-	-	рибний пудинг	рибний пудинг
under-roast pudding	-	-	під-смажений пудинг*	м’ясний хлібець (виріб з рідкого тіста, що в давнину випікався під м’ясом, що смажилось на відкритому вогні, попередник йоркширського пудингу)
dripping pudding	-	-	-	сочистий пудинг (містить розтоплений м’ясний жир)
pease pudding	-	гороховий пудинг	пудинговий пудинг*	горохова каша, горохове пюре
potato pudding	-	-	картопляний пудинг	картопляний пудинг
curate’s pudding	-	-	пудинг куратів*	пустий картопляний пудинг, бідний картопляний пудинг

Translations and translation commentaries marked with an asterisk in Table 2, in view of the definitions above, fail to adequately deliver the original reference, or, in case of Google Translator, do not make much sense.

3. Pudding as a dessert

Though pudding originated as a kind of sausage, today it is above all a popular dessert, appearing in a multitude of forms and tastes. The most celebrated kind is Christmas pudding, also known as plum pudding, an essential element of Christmas festivities. There are a couple of things about Christmas pudding that can surprise foreigners not familiar with the dessert, one being that the pudding is flamed before serving, another that, though called plum pudding, it does

not contain any actual plums, as in the old days the word *plum* was used to refer to “a dried grape or raisin as used for puddings, cakes, etc.” [8, p. 1014], and one more that, though Christmas pudding is considered to be “a must” for Christmas, many British people actually find it not very palatable.

The popular English Christmas carol “We Wish You a Merry Christmas” contains an enigmatic line “Oh, bring us some figgy pudding”, which makes us today wonder whether figs used to be so common as a filling for Christmas pudding in the old days – this is another trap for a translator, as the word *figgy* only meant that the pudding was made with raisins [14, p. 200-201].

Sweet puddings are so many that it is impossible within this paper to provide a description of each particular member of this family. Most of them can be grouped either by the major ingredient (bread pudding, lemon pudding, orange pudding, marrow pudding, rice pudding, sago pudding, semolina pudding, cheese pudding, chocolate fudge pudding, treacle pudding, bread-and-butter pudding, beastings pudding, macaroni pudding, etc.) or the name of the locality (Chester pudding, Chichester pudding, Deptford pudding, Glastonbury pudding, Isle of Wight pudding, Manchester pudding, Newcastle pudding, Northumberland pudding, Rochester pudding, etc.) or both (Lincolnshire apple pudding). Some have fancy names like Baroness pudding or Her Majesty’s pudding, some quite unimaginative names like Monday pudding. There is even a pudding called Spotted Dick, which is a “steamed sponge pudding speckled with dark dried fruit” [13]. The word *dick* in its name, which causes a lot of jokes, is believed to be just an old dialectal pronunciation of *dough*.

When dealing with these names, a translator often has to be on the alert – if names like Manchester (or any other geographical) pudding can be rendered in Ukrainian offhand, others, like Spotted Dick or Monday pudding (which is “slices of left-over pudding cooked with custard” [13]) or historical beastings pudding (“a custard made with beasting, or beesting – the first milk drawn from a cow after she gives birth” [13]) require a little research – reading recipes, looking at pictures, etc. Some of the puddings, like rice pudding, semolina pudding, macaroni pudding appear to have very close relatives in Ukrainian cuisine, so the translator, instead of calling them *пудинг*, should rather fetch a lexical analog. English-Ukrainian dictionaries can offer little help with sweet puddings. Google, of course, conscientiously gives translations (mostly literal), some of which naturally require editing.

Table 3 summarizes translations of some of the above-mentioned kinds of sweet puddings. It does not include “toponymic” puddings.

Table 3

English name	Gorot’	ABBY Lingvo Live	Google Translator	Our translation
Baroness pudding	-	-	баронесовий пудинг	пудинг баронеси
beastings pudding	-	-	пудинг	молозивний пудинг
bread pudding	-	-	хлібний пудинг	хлібний пиріг, хлібний пудинг
bread-and-butter pudding	-	-	хліб та масло пудинг	хлібний пудинг
cheese pudding	-	-	сирний пудинг	сирний пудинг, сирне суфле
chocolate fudge pudding	-	-	шоколадний пудинг	шоколадний пудинг
Christmas pudding	різдвяний пудинг	-	різдвяний пудинг	різдвяний пудинг
Her Majesty’s pudding	-	-	пудинг її величності	пудинг Її Величності (ванільний пудинг з фруктами)
macaroni pudding	-	-	макаронний пудинг	макаронник, макаронна запіканка
marrow pudding	-	-	пудинг кісткового мозку	пудинг з кістковим мозком
Monday pudding	-	-	понеділокний пудинг	вчорашній пудинг, понеділковий пудинг
orange pudding	-	-	помаранчевий пудинг	апельсиновий пудинг
plum pudding	сливовий пудинг сливовий пиріг	плагпудинг, ізомний пудинг (традиційна різдвяна страва)	сливовий пудинг	різдвяний пудинг
rice pudding	рисовий пудинг	рисовий пудинг	рисовий пудинг	(молочна) рисова каша
sago pudding	-	-	пудинг саго	саговий пудинг

semolina pudding	-	-	пудинг манної крупи	манна каша
Spotted Dick	-	«далматець», варений пудинг з родзинками	плямистий Дік	пудинг «Плямистий Дік», «Далматин»
treacle pudding	-	-	пудинг	пудинг з патокою

Summing up, we can say that the English proverb featured in the title of this paper can indeed serve a good metaphor, advising translators who come face to face with the British pudding and feel responsibility for adequate representation of this multifaceted culinary phenomenon to a reader from another culture, to “dig into it” first.

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