APPENDIX I

Human Translateability Test

by

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May, 1959

The following sentences were read to eight people, four of whom were British, and four American:

S¹ The box was in the pen.
S² The inkstand was in the pen.

The following responses are to be noted:

"Please repeat the sentence."
"It doesn't make sense."
"An inkstand can't possibly be in a pen."
"You're fooling. Come now."
"What sort of pen do you mean? The thing you write with, or a pig-pen?"
"Do you mean "pen", or do you really mean penitentiary?"
"Pen has several meanings; which do you mean?"

The following full paragraph was then read to the same people:

p¹ (S¹) Little John was looking for his toy box. Finally he found it. THE BOX WAS IN THE PEN. Little John was very happy.

The spontaneous responses noted after the paragraph was read were 100% of the nature, "Oh, you mean play-pen. Why didn't you say so at the beginning. Were you pulling my leg?" In other words, these eight people were all in agreement that the sentences, S¹ and S², when read, were non-sense-carrying. However, when p¹ (S¹) was read, incorporating S¹ within its full context, S¹ made more sense. One person suggested, however, that aside from the fictitious ring of S¹ semantically, it carries another fictitious implication, in that if Little John was old enough to have a toy box, he would be too old to need a play-pen! (And this came from a person who knows children well.) Unless, of course, Little John had a baby brother or sister, who at the time had need of a play-pen.
As a result of further discussion with the eight people who were submitted to the translateability test, it became clear that "pen", used in $S^1$ to mean "play-pen", would never be used by itself unless its context of children had already been established by a previous sentence(s), or paragraph. It was further suggested that even with the full reading of $p^n(S^1)$, it is not clear that "pen" necessarily means "play-pen"; it could conceivably mean "pig-pen" if little John, say, lived on a farm. Therefore, it becomes even clearer that for any fair testing of such a paragraph, if such a paragraph is to be used for testing human translateability, a fair paragraph must be selected, and it was agreed that $p^n(S^1)$ is not a fair test.

In the case of $S^2$, the same objections apply, even more strongly. For a full discussion of this sentence, see the main paper.

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