

Can we do without metarepresentation in linguistic communication?

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There are two ways of looking metarepresentation in linguistic communication: as something that only occurs in some utterances (e.g. irony); as something which is mandatory in linguistic interpretation, whatever the nature of the utterance concerned.

I want to defend the second position here, which itself amounts to two possibilities: the first one is that we need metarepresentations in the interpretation *process* itself; the second is that metarepresentations (in the form *The speaker means that p*) are the *result* of the interpretation process. Though it may well be the case that some types of utterances (e.g. irony) must include metarepresentations in their interpretation process, this is unlikely to be the general case, for reasons of cognitive cost. On the other hand, I will defend the idea that the *result* of the interpretation process must always be a metarepresentation. In particular, I will argue, against naturalist approaches to linguistic communication such as Millikan's, that such metarepresentations are criterial to assess the success of the communication process.