The aim of this talk is to explore how semiotic pragmatism in linguistic anthropology (e.g. Silverstein 1976, 1993, 2004; Agha 2007; Lucy 1993; Parmentier 1994) and politeness research in linguistic pragmatics (e.g. Kádár and Haugh 2013; Holmes et al. 2012; Murata 2014) inform each other. For this purpose, I first provide the conceptual background of semiotic pragmatism by referring to Charles Sanders Peirce, Roman Jakobson, and Michael Silverstein, among others. In particular, I highlight the key concepts of ‘metapragmatics’ (Silverstein 1976, 1981, 1993) and ‘metapragmatic awareness’ (Verschueren 2004). My point is to argue that an analytic focus on the meta-dimension of discourse will create synergies between linguistic anthropology and politeness research, with reference to the analysis of intercultural encounters.

Illustrative data are taken from encounters between Americans and Japanese, Japanese/New Zealanders and Japanese, and New Zealanders and Japanese (Yamaguchi 2009, 2012, 2104; cf. Haugh 2010). Through analysis I argue that linking micro-macro perspectives is a productive goal in the metapragmatic approaches to discourse. Furthermore, I draw out implications for further research and suggest that the two paradigms should be further strengthened by the cognitive anthropological notion of ‘schema’ (D’Andrade 1995).