The discourse marker *talè* 'look' in Sicilian and the development of mirativity

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In this talk, I'll illustrate the morphosyntactic properties and the pragmatic functions of *talè* in Sicilian. Its morphologically invariability and its restricted syntactic distribution are taken as evidence for its status as a discourse marker. Despite its uncertain origins, this particle is clearly related to the verb *taliari* 'look' and it shows a functional behaviour similar to the verb-based discourse markers equivalent to English *look* in other Romance languages, sharing in particular the function of attention-getting (cf. Italian *guarda*, Spanish *mira*). Unlike its Romance counterparts, however, *talè* has additionally developed a mirative value, which may complement its function as attention-getter or serve as its sole expressive and subjective meaning. This prominent and frequent mirative function, which only appears in limited or constrained contexts in other Romance languages, suggests a higher degree of grammaticalization and functional specialization for *talè*, and reflects more advanced stages in the evolution of pragmatic functions that characterize Romance verb-based discourse particles. From a diachronic perspective, I will argue that its pragmatic functions emerged from deictic properties and that the attention-getting function acts as an intermediate stage in the development of the mirative use.