Linguistic Similarities Build Friendships and Echo Chambers

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People with traits, interests, and experiences in common are more likely to become friends, and findings in *Psychological Science* indicate that friends also [influence one another's linguistic styles over time](#), contributing to the relational "echo chambers" common on social media and in society as a whole.

"A key driver of social interactionis the principle of homophily: 'birds of a feather flock together,'" write Balazs Kovacs (YaleUniversity) and colleague Adam M. Kleinbaum(Dartmouth College). "We suggest that the causal arrow points in the otherdirection as well: In addition to linguistic similarity driving tie formation,friendship ties will also induce increases in linguistic similarity."

Kovacs and Kleinbaum investigatedthis cyclical relationship through a set of two complementary studies: oneanalyzing the linguistic styles and in-person social networks of graduatestudents and another following the relationships between users of the onlinereview platform Yelp.

In the university study, Kovacs andKleinbaum compared the linguistic styles of 285 first-year graduate studentsusing both their application essay and an exam essay written 2 months later.The researchers also collected information about students' social networkswithin the graduate program at both time points.

In line with previous findings, Kovacs and Kleinbaum found that students who began the semester with more similar linguistic styles were also more likely to report spending free time together and were more likely to remain friends if they had already formed a connection at the beginning of the program. Additionally, students who became friends early in the program demonstrated more similar linguistic styles during the written exam.

See a longer version of this article.