People With Similar Language Styles Are More Romantically Compatible

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Study finds that people who speak in similar styles are more compatible

It's February and love is in the air! We know that people tend to be attracted to, date, and marry other people who resemble themselves in terms of personality, values, and physical appearance. However, these features only skim the surface of what makes a relationship work. The ways that people talk are also important. A new study published in *Psychological Science*, finds that people who speak in similar styles are more compatible.

A study led by James Pennebaker, University of Texas at Austin, examined whether the speaking and writing styles couples adopt during conversation with each other predict future dating behavior and the long-term strength of relationships. They conducted two experiments in which a computer compared partners' language styles.

In the first study, pairs of college students had four-minute speed dates while their conversations were recorded. Almost every pair covered the same topics: What's your major? Where are you from? How do you like college? Every conversation sounded more or less the same to the naked ear, but text analysis revealed stark differences in language synchrony. The pairs whose language style matching scores were above average were more than three times as likely to both want future contact than pairs whose speaking styles were out of sync.

A second study revealed the same pattern in everyday online chats between dating couples over the course of 10 days. Almost 80 percent of the couples whose writing style matched were still dating three months later, compared with approximately 54 percent of the couples who didn't match as well.

What people are saying to each other is often important, but how they are saying it may be even more telling.People aren't consciously synchronizing their speech, Pennebaker says. "What's wonderful about this is we don't really make that decision; it just comes out of our mouths."