

Liar, Liar, Nose on Fire!



Posted by [Amy Briggs](#) of National Geographic in [Tales of the Weird](#) on December 6, 2012

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A red-nosed liar, as seen through a thermographic camera (Image: University of Granada)

New research from the University of Granada's Department of Experimental Psychology makes it as plain as the nose on your face: [When people lie, their noses get hotter](#). Nicknamed the "Pinocchio effect," the phenomenon was observed during a study that applied thermography to psychology to see what the body's temperature could reveal about the mind.

The Heat is On

Developed during World War II for military surveillance, thermography uses special heat-sensitive cameras to detect different temperatures of objects. The images the cameras produce, called thermograms, give a visual representation of the hot and cool areas of a subject. Today, the technology has a wide variety of applications—from medicine to engineering.

The two lead researchers on the project, [Emilio Gómez Milán](#) and [Elvira Salazar López](#), have been exploring new applications of thermography to psychology. The pair believes that using heat-sensing cameras can tell us much about the human mind. ([Live Science](#) has reported that their research is part of a doctoral dissertation and yet to be published in a peer-reviewed journal.)

You Can't Hide Your Lying Nose

When the researchers studied the thermograms of their lying subjects, they saw that the temperature around their noses and the inner corners of their eyes increased. The researchers believe that lying activates a neural region called the insula, a component of the brain involved in reward, emotion, and temperature regulation. When strong emotions are openly expressed, the insula becomes more active, state the researchers.

The team also examined thermograms of subjects in other situations and found intriguing results. Facial temperature drops when performing a tough mental task but rises when during an anxiety attack. Emilio Gómez Milán and Elvira Salazar López claim these temperature changes can be used to assess the physical, mental, and emotional status of the subject. "The thermogram is a somatic marker of subjective or mental states and allows us see what a person is feeling or thinking," Salazar López states.

Keywords: [Amy Briggs](#), [David Braun](#), [dishonesty](#), [Liar](#), [nose](#), [pinocchio effect](#), [psychology](#), [Tales of the Weird](#), [thermography](#), [University of Grenada](#)

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