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Liars’ noses may not grow, but they are feeling the heat

It doesn't outright glow — and it doesn't grow — but researchers have confirmed the human nose heats up a tad when we lie.

It's been dubbed the Pinocchio effect and was studied by a team at the University of Granada that used a combination of psychology and sophisticated thermography.

Researchers Dr. Emilio Gomez Milan and Dr. Elvira Salazar Lopez, working out of the university in Granada, Spain, are pioneers when it comes to combining psychology and thermography.

Thermography is a technique that uses specialized cameras to photograph where heat is emitted by a given subject or object (buildings, motors, animals, humans). The pictures are then printed with various colours depicting the amount of heat in any specific area.

White denotes the warmest areas; reds and yellows point to intermediate temperatures; and blue represents the coolest spots.

In a doctoral thesis recently completed by the two researchers, they say when a person lies they experience an increase in the temperature around the nose and at the orbital muscle at the corner of the eye.

The two say that when a “mental effort” is made while performing difficult tasks, such as being interrogated and even lying, face temperature changes due to a series of complex biological reactions.

When individuals perform considerable mental effort their face temperature drops. When anxiety is involved — such as when a person is telling a lie — temperature rises.

The pair also determined the thermal footprint of aerobic exercise and different dance modalities such as ballet.

They found through the thermal imaging that when a person is dancing the flamenco the temperature in the dancer's buttocks drops but increases in the forearms.

It's called a “thermal footprint” with each different dance displaying a unique pattern.

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