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Lie to me:
clues to deceit and leakage

Introduction

Lies have always been a mystery to me. Some people have a sixth sense; unfortunately I do not. I have never considered myself an extremely observant person and that is why I used to pay little attention to facial expressions. That makes even harder to know when someone is lying. For this reason, I came up with the idea of investing some time in doing a little research on that topic.

I must also admit I have always been very fond of crime series such as *Castle* and *Criminal Minds* and I used to watch a series starred by a man who was able to know when a person was lying. I thought it was all science fiction until the day I found out it was based on scientific research. From that day on, I started reading those studies and that is what my research project is about.

Methodology

A lot of different research has been done and there are many theories about lie detection. In this project I have decided to get deeper into Paul Ekman's findings. He is the psychologist who discovered micro expressions. He has worked for decades on this topic and I thought his research would be quite reliable. I decided to compare

and contrast the information found from various sources. I must also say that it was not an easy task as there is a lot of not-very-reliable information. I also got in touch with an expert in the matter called Dr. Alhour, from Qatar. As there is much written about this topic, for my practical part I decided to create a short film explaining, in a very basic way, the main lie indicators so that everybody could learn to «detect» when somebody is lying. And I have to say that it worked, as some of my friends have told me that it has been useful for them.

In order to make things clear to the general public, I analysed some cases of famous people lying such as Bill Clinton, Daniel Radcliffe and Matthew McConaughey. I analysed the signs by which we know they are lying. Apart from these celebrities, I also used images of other people to show that lying signs are universal, something that I looked into very deeply as I found very interesting the fact that, even when coming from different cultures, the signs were absolutely the same.

Body of the project

What is a lie? Most of us think a lie is a false statement. However, is a false statement always a lie? Not really. A lie is an untrue or deceptive statement *deliberately* used to mislead. The word «deliberately» is extremely important; someone who is providing false information without knowing it is not lying.

There are two ways of lying: to *conceal* and to *falsify.* When concealing, the liar holds back some information without actually saying anything untrue. In falsifying, an additional step is taken. Not only does the liar withhold true information, but he presents false information as if it were true. Often it is necessary to combine concealing and falsifying to pull off the deceit, but sometimes a liar can get away just with concealment.

There are some other ways to lie. One would be accepting the emotion felt but making up the reason. Another would be telling the truth but with a twist, so the victim does not believe it. It is telling the truth but exaggerating, so the truth would ridicule the person who is suspecting. A mocking tone of voice or expression would also do the trick. Any of these lies can be betrayed by some aspect of the deceiver's behaviour.

There are two kinds of clues to deceit. A mistake may reveal the truth, or it may only suggest that what was said or shown is untrue without revealing the truth. When a liar mistakenly reveals the truth, we will call it *leakage.* When the liar's behavior suggests he or she is lying without revealing the truth, we will call it a *deception clue.* A facial expression, tone of voice, slip of the tongue, or certain gestures could leak true feelings.

However, the problem is there is not a specific sign that can lead us to think that a person is lying. That is the problem. We can only get some hints which show lack

of preparation, for instance when some facial expression shows an emotion that should not be felt in that moment. These are known as leakage or deception clues. The major problem is that you must get information from a lot of different sources such as words, pauses, sound of the voice, expressions, head movements, gestures, posture, respiration, flushing or blanching, sweating and others. Some of these sources can give the information simultaneously so it can be quite a tough task for the lie catcher. Not every source of information during a conversation is reliable. Some leak more than others. However, people usually pay more attention to the least trustworthy sources which are words and facial expressions.

Liars usually cannot control all of their behaviour so they try to conceal and fake what they think may catch most attention of other people. They tend to be extremely careful with the words used. Liars censor what they say, concealing messages they do not want to deliver, not only because they have learned that everyone pays attention to this source but also because they know that they will be held more accountable for their words than for the sound of their voice, facial expressions, or body movements. Denying a facial expression will always be easier than denying something that you have said.

There is still another more important reason why there are more clues to deceit in the face than in words. The face is directly connected to those areas of the brain involved in emotion, and words are not. When we feel an emotion, some muscles in our faces activate unintentionally. Facial expressions appear together with an emotion, they are not chosen deliberately, unless they are fake. Facial expressions are a dual system, voluntary and involuntary, lying and telling the truth, often at the same time. That is why facial expressions can be so complex, confusing, and fascinating.

What is also related to some areas of the brain linked to emotion is the voice. It is extremely difficult to conceal a change in the voice that happens when an emotion is aroused. That is why it would be easier to notice these changes than to catch someone's lie by their words. People are surprised the first time they hear themselves on a tape recorder, because self-monitoring of the voice comes partly through bone conduction, and it sounds different so they might not notice those changes and they may not conceal them.

The body is another great source for leakage and deception clues. Unlike the face and the voice, body movements are not connected to brain areas linked to emotions. Moreover, people can notice and see what they are doing with their body. For this reason, hiding your movements should be easier than concealing facial expressions or changes in your voice. Nevertheless, few people care about it. The body leaks because it is ignored: people are too worried paying attention to the words and analysing the face.
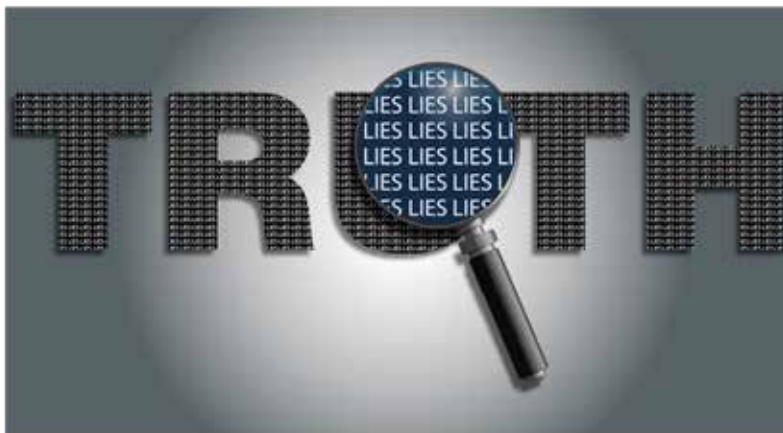
Although we all know words can be false, we tend to believe what other people are saying, which does not mean we should not listen to others. Sometimes, there can be verbal mistakes that can provide deception clues and even these are inexistent, there might be discrepancy between what is being said and the emotion shown in the face. However, the major part of the deception clues in the voice, face or body are ignored or misinterpreted.

Conclusion

After so much research, I have realised that spotting a liar is not an easy task. This project has taught me how many signs can tell you somebody is lying, such as micro expressions, emblematic slips, verbal slips, as well as illustrators and squelched expressions, as widely explained in this project.

However, at the same time I have discovered that none of these hints are totally conclusive since different factors must be taken into account when spotting lies, such as disbelieving-a-truth mistakes, as well as the emotions the innocent suspect might feel while being enquired.

Even if nothing is conclusive, I have learnt to be more observant and to give more

importance to body language than what I did in the past. I was surprised to discover that sometimes we can gesticulate even without noticing and I hope to restrain myself from doing them.

Will I be able to spot a liar? I am not sure, though I will probably be at least fore-warned. Has this project taught me how to be a better liar? Who knows.

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