

## Pinocchio Syndrome Relationship with the Mutinous Boy in Carlo Collodi's Novel

Aseel Kadhim Humaidan Ouda

Department of English/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ University of Babylon

[aseel722000@yahoo.com](mailto:aseel722000@yahoo.com)

Submission date: 22/10/2021

Acceptance date: 17 / 11 /2021

Publication date: 15/1/2022

### Abstract

Lying is a social malady that has a negative impact on the social fabric of society. Despite the positive side of technological progress, it was not without its negative aspects, as lies spread through the Internet, social media, fake news and propaganda. The current research aims to find out whether there is a relationship between lying and Pinocchio syndrome and whether the phenomenon of lying associated with the long nose is just a stereotype passed from generation to generation through the collective subconscious mind across different cultures and countries. Is the physiological change in the human nose, in some cases, related to lying, or is it just a hypothesis developed by Carlo Collodi for his novel *The Adventures of Pinocchio*? Or whether Collodi's little mutinous protagonist resorts to lying as a way to rebel against his caregivers. The study finally comes to a conclusion of the importance of education to eliminate many social problems, including lying — Pinocchio discovers, at the end of his journey, where he faces many obstacles, the importance of education in acquiring lofty moral values such as honesty and selflessness. Consequently, he is liberated from the inanimate wooden body.

**Keywords:** *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, Carlo Collodi, Pinocchio syndrome, lying.

### علاقة متلازمة بينوكيو مع الصبي المتمرد في رواية كارلو كولودى

أسيل كاظم حميدان عوده

قسم اللغة الانجليزية / كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية / جامعة بابل

### المخلص

ازداد الكذب على نطاق واسع عبر الإنترنت ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والأخبار المزيفة وأصبح تحدياً للمجتمعات المعاصرة. يهدف البحث الحالي إلى معرفة ما إذا كانت هناك علاقة بين الكذب ومتلازمة بينوكيو، وما إذا كانت ظاهرة الكذب المرتبطة بالأنف الطويل هي مجرد صورة نمطية تنتقل من جيل إلى جيل عبر المجتمع الجماعي. اللاوعي عبر مختلف الثقافات والبلدان. هل التغيير الفسيولوجي في أنف الإنسان، في بعض الحالات، مرتبط بالكذب، أو إنه مجرد فرضية وضعها كارلو كولودى لروايته "مغامرات بينوكيو"؟ أو ما إذا كان البطل الصغير المتمرد في رواية كارلو كولودى قد لجأ إلى الكذب وسيلة للتمرد على مقدمي الرعاية له. توصلت الدراسة أخيراً إلى استنتاج أهمية التعليم في القضاء على العديد من المشكلات الاجتماعية ومنها الكذب -

يكتشف بينوكيو في نهاية رحلته، إذ واجه العديد من المعوقات، أهمية التعليم في اكتساب قيم أخلاقية سامية مثل الصدق، والأمانة، ونكران الذات. ومن ثم، يتحرر بينوكيو من جسده الخشبي.

الكلمات الدالة: "مغامرات بينوكيو"، كارلو كولودي، متلازمة بينوكيو، الكذب.

### 1.1. Pinocchio Syndrome and the Mutinous Child

The nose that grows longer whenever the person lies and gets shorter when he tells the truth is a European legend borrowed from Carlo Collodi's *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. His novel was associated with the so-called "**Pinocchio Syndrome**"—sometimes called "Pinocchio complex". Collodi's fictitious lying-induced nose growth has gained scientific attention in recent years.

Carlo Collodi's novel gained such an international reputation that Pinocchio became an icon of lies in social media. As an icon of lies, the caricature took advantage of Pinocchio's facial features to become a **stereotype of lying politicians**. [1] In Collodi's novel, Pinocchio's nose is associated with lying; it becomes part of the subconscious collective mind. In Collodi's original novel, Pinocchio lies and his nose grows in just two scenes [2: chaps 17, 29], while Disney amplified this idea and gave it a central role in the film. Disney's 1940 animated movie version distorted, and censored the puppet's adventures enough to whitewash the original and create an Americanized domesticated and conspiratorial Pinocchio who dominates Western culture to the present day. Disney adaptation of Collodi's Pinocchio eclipsed the darker origin in American culture. [1]

Seemingly, this myth has some validity. Dr. Elaine Hirsch, Dean of Rhinology in Chicago, explained the phenomenon of an over-growing nose when a person lies to the fact that the liar (often bewildered) suffers from high blood pressure, increased heart rate, and a swollen nose because lying is an abnormal behavior that contradicts with what is happening inside the person's heart. In other words, there is no consistency between the inside and the outside, and there is a difference between what the tongue says and what the outside says to the observers. In 2012, Spanish researchers linked the phenomenon of heat to the brain region, the insula, which plays a role in consciousness and body temperature regulation, as the increase in brain activity in that region corresponds with lying and the nasal heat concentration. The fact that this finding was named after Pinocchio demonstrates how strong the link between noses and liars is, as evidenced by Collodi's narrative. [3]

Liars suffer from severe hiccups that occur only when the person lies, and if he stops lying, hiccups subside until they stop automatically, but if it is a big lie and he cannot correct it, he will continue to hiccup. People with Pinocchio syndrome have difficulty in establishing social relationships. They are easily discovered by people when they lie. This method of classifying lies may not be true except in *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. This is an indication that truth can be said in various ways, including truth that is said by not telling the truth, or by another statement that contradicts, or hides or falsifies the truth. A long nose is a way of observing false

speech, with a prominent bump in the nose and a change in size, length, and shape—all of which are signs that do not reveal the lie, but rather expose the liar and reveal his intentions. This tension between saying the truth and lying is called “Pinocchio Syndrome”. Since the beginning of his creation, Pinocchio’s nose has been rebellious against its maker, refusing to take its appropriate size. The longer its maker shortens it, the longer it becomes, until that protrusion in the manner of a comb becomes a sign of rebellion of the puppet against its maker; rebellion of the son against his father, and of the slave against his master. The Puppet’s nose represents a special kind of rebellion against the master; hence, rebellion adopts lying as a way to escape from authority of the father. However, lying is translated as “Pinocchio Syndrome”, or falsifying the truth. Since lies are of various types, “including those whose ropes are short, and those whose noses are long,” the noses are in turn different types, with no common denominator among them except that they become prematurely polygraphs for discovering lies. [4]

Another aspect of “Pinocchio Syndrome” is the tension between truth and the nose, or between truth and smell. Between the reality of smells, and the secrets of the nose, there is a distance that is no longer measured by the length or shortness of the nose, but rather by what is right and wrong between the saying and the truth. It seems that this model of telling the truths was preferred by Nietzsche who stated: “I am the first to discover the truth, because I am the first to sniff, and the first to label a lie as a lie [...] My whole genius lies in my nostrils.” [5: p.132]

Finally, whether Pinocchio syndrome is associated with lying or with false memory, both conditions mean that the person imagines unreal situations. If the increase in the length of the nose is associated with lying, then this means that the person has deliberately lied and lying results from the conscious mind. If Pinocchio syndrome is associated with false memory, this means that the person does not intend to lie because it is the result of the subconscious mind, where a person imagines situations that are delusional. Pinocchio’s nose is getting longer since his creation, and this means that his maker may suffer from a false memory resulting from the subconscious mind. Loneliness, isolation, and decaying that surrounded Geppetto prompted his subconscious mind to imagine certain situations as if they were real and happened in the past. In other words, Pinocchio is an idea or an abstract image that personifies what is hidden in Geppetto’s subconscious mind.

## 1.2. Pinocchio and Adam the Mutinous

Pinocchio is an icon of Adam, denying the Creator’s blessings, and disobeying the Lord’s commands. It is a symbol of human nature sandwiched between the etheric world and the underworld, and is the embodiment of good and evil. Pinocchio condemns his loved ones who urge him to take responsibility. He disappoints his affectionate father, Geppetto, thinking that he would be an obedient son. The Pinocchio story emphasizes the possibility of making a profound change by changing one’s thinking and redeeming oneself through good deeds. After disappointing his

father, thwarting the Good Fairy, and killing the Talking Cricket, Pinocchio decides to change. He donates his painstakingly earned money, to an agent of fairies who is very ill, he also saves his father who is swallowed by a giant shark. This selfless behaviour is a turning point: Pinocchio finally attains his dream of becoming a real boy. This transformation is emblematic of what it means to be humane. [6]

Adam and Pinocchio are united by denial and rebellion against their masters. They're rebels who break the word of their creators. As the father of mankind, Adam, went through a journey of trials and tribulations to obtain salvation, Pinocchio goes through a series of adventures that end with his liberation from his wooden body. The meeting of virtue and vice in the same being is embodied by Pinocchio in Collodi's novel, as well as Adam in the stories of the Holy Qur'an and the Bible. Some creatures act and speak vice, but they have the ability to change into virtue. Pinocchio is the embodiment of a naughty child who is troublesome, but also has the power to be good.

Stanton Samenow explains Pinocchio's rebellious behaviour. In his "Pinocchio: The Transformation of a Criminal in the Making," Samenow claims that Pinocchio is a criminal in the making, that is, Pinocchio suffers from oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). His actions against his father and carers are defined by disobedience and defiance. When he's in trouble, he professes good intentions but quickly withdraws and denies his knowledge of right and wrong. He vows to go to school, leaves bad companions, and does what the elders tell him to do, but he makes a promise and then immediately breaks it. After various ordeals, including imprisonment, having his feet burned, being subjected to slavery and being turned into a donkey, Pinocchio promises to reform himself, but once he is out of trouble, he immediately forgets all his good decisions. [7]

The Talking Cricket warns Pinocchio, "Woe to boys who refuse to obey their parents and run away from home! They will never be happy in this world, and when they are older they will be very sorry for it." [2: chap.4] Not heeding this advice, he immediately forgets all his good relations, and becomes a prey of the tricksters Cat and Fox, who promise to help him turn five gold coins into a tree of money. After handing his coins to the crooks, he ends up hanging on a tree. After surviving death, Pinocchio does not consider what happens to him and falls into another dilemma because he fails to listen to those who cares for him. Geppetto sells his coat to send the boy to school. The author introduces the idea that parents are the reason behind the children existence. The way Pinocchio offends his creator (by selling his textbook to enter the Great Marionette Theatre) puts him in trouble (the fire-eating puppet master wants to burn him) just as Adam and Eve become in trouble when they disobeyed the Creator. The negative consequence of disobedience takes root in the mind of the child-reader. [4] Pinocchio hates the consequences of his actions, but he is slow to learn. This situation reminds us of what Prophet Muhammed, peace and blessings be upon him, said: "A believer is not stung from the same hole twice."

Pinocchio suffers not only from behavioral defiant disorder, but he also suffers from self-conceit. His potential for good is obvious but this feeling is fleeting. He

believes that what applies to others does not apply to him. He tells Geppetto, "I am not like other boys! I am better than all of them and I always tell the truth. I promise you, Father...." [2: chap.8] Although Collodi's novel evokes the story of human creation to bring it gently to the mind of the child, he reinterprets it in a playful way when he makes every member of the novel tamper with Geppetto whenever he finishes sculpting and flattening the puppet like the moving eyes and laughing mouth fissuring and the nose, which, as soon as he finishes photographing it, lengthens until it reaches an amazing length, so the carpenter shortens it, except that the nose continues to lengthen, unconcerned with the concern of its maker. Rather, he keeps getting shorter and longer in many scenes of the novel the more Pinocchio lies. In the scene he joins the fairy after recovering from illness, she asks him where he puts the gold coins. He tells three lies that make the fairy laugh at him. He asks her why she laughs. She replies, "Because of your nose that keeps getting longer, I laugh at your lies." Pinocchio asks her, "How did you know that I lied?" And the fairy replies: "Son, lies are known at once. Including lies whose rope is short, and those whose nose is long. It is clear that your lies are of the second category." [2: chap.17, p. 101].

Finally, as the Creator pardoned the iniquities of the father of mankind, the Good Fairy tells Pinocchio to "keep on doing so well, and you will be happy." She promises, "in reward for your kind heart, I forgive you for all your old mischief. Boys who love and take good care of their parents when they are old and sick, deserve praise even though they may not be held up as models of obedience and good behaviour." Only after Pinocchio learns to obey his maker and listens to the advice of those who care about him and takes responsibility, he becomes a real boy.

### 1.3. *Pinocchio* an Icon of Italian Culture

*The Adventures of Pinocchio* became an icon of Italian culture, and Pinocchio's long nose became part of the Western collective unconscious. *The Adventures of Pinocchio* had an impact on Italian culture as an allegory that reflected Italian societal norms and sought to correct the miserable lifestyle of the lower and middle classes, so that the state could achieve national pride and harmony. [1] The novel was published in 1883, thirteen years after the unification of Italy in 1870. Although Italy was united geographically, it was still chaotic socially. To achieve internal cohesion that corresponds to its geographical unity, the state encouraged children literature to inculcate "a unified social and national consciousness in the youth" and to create "a sense of social responsibility in the poor and the middle class alike." [8: pp. 9,13).

On the other hand, Collodi's novel had an impact on education in Italy. According to John Hopper and Anna Crucina, Pinocchio is not only an icon of the age of fake news and alternative truths but he was also an icon of the importance of education. Collodi thought that the best contribution he could make to the future of his country was to improve the moral standard of the future generations. [9]

At the time the book was published, Italy was facing a serious problem caused by industrialization and the move from the countryside to the city, where there was a demand for working hands in the factories. This problem expanded to include several industrialized European countries. This prompted many Italian peasants to migrate to



Italian cities or to foreign countries looking for a job. The basic necessities that Pinocchio asks for are work, to be good, and to study. And in the end, Pinocchio's desire to support his father and dedicate himself to these things turns him into a real boy with modern conveniences. [3] The events take place in the impoverished rural areas that most Italian politicians ignore. Because of Pinocchio's ignorance and lack of education, he falls into the trap of the tricksters (the Cat and the Fox), who deceive him, claiming that sowing five gold coins would grow a fortune tree and become rich. After he has gone to the court to accuse the scammers, Judge Monkey sends him to prison for wasting the judge's time. Collodi's irony is evident in this scene.

The consequences of not having access to education in Italy at the end of the nineteenth century are visible in the dark scene; Pinocchio and his friend go to an area known as Toyland, believing it to be paradise. But once they arrive, they turn into donkeys. Pinocchio escapes, but his friend is forced to work to death, and such was the fate awaited many unqualified workers in Collodi's time. John and Anna explain that the word donkey in Italy applies to those who work to exhaustion until they eventually die. Collodi's idea is that being a donkey in school leads him to work like a donkey afterward, and the only way to avoid life and death for donkeys is through education. Seven chapters before the end, Pinocchio goes to school, excels in his studies, and receives a promise of becoming a lively boy. But he makes a terrible mistake; he goes to Toyland, where he turns into a donkey. Then, after a period of terrible misery, he begins studying, but only when he begins to take responsibility for himself and those he loves does he earn his right to become a human being. [9]

We conclude this section noting Collodi's obvious influence on other fields. His influence was not limited to Italian education, but it also extended to architecture and horticulture. An indication of *Pinocchio's* influence is the Pinocchio Park, which was opened in 1956 in honor of the famous writer Carlo Collodi. It is a large outdoor garden dedicated to Carlo Collodi and his novel *Pinocchio*. The park contains metal and bronze sculptures, figurines, and topiaries depicting the novel's characters. [1] In addition to Pinocchio Park, Villa Collodi, where the writer spent his youth in 1826, became an important tourist attraction in Italy. [10]

## Conclusion

The novel dealt with social, political and religious dimensions. The novel criticized the social malady of lying and its effects on the individual and society. This social illness was embodied by Pinocchio's growing nose, the more he falsifies the truth. Lying is an adjective that is neither commendable nor excused. There is no white lie. Lying is one. As what the writer Hussam Khattab says: "If our noses are destined to get bigger the more we lie, we may end up jamming the tops of our noses and climbing up to get a little fresh air, or we may live in complete darkness. Because the long noses are blocking the sun's rays...preventing us from seeing our surroundings." [11]

The novel was not only limited to criticizing the social disease of lying, but it also had a political dimension. Carlo Lorenzini went further when he criticized the rulers

of his country for neglecting and marginalizing the poor socially. He wanted to deliver a message about the necessity of education for children and the future generation to free them from the quagmire of ignorance and slavery. He believed that education frees children from intellectual slavery, expands their awareness, increases their tolerance of responsibility, and helps them face the injustice that Italy suffered in the nineteenth century. Collodi told us that an ignorant man is like a puppet whose strings moved by others.

On the other hand, if we look at the novel as an epic and consider the character of Pinocchio an epic hero *The Adventures of Pinocchio* can be considered a journey from sin to redemption. Just as the ship needs a guide on trip, the sinner on his journey needs a mentor. This is what happened with Adam and Pinocchio. The Creator directed Adam to the path of salvation and warned him not to fall into the trap of Satan, just as Geppetto who directed his son to become a real boy. *Pinocchio* is the story of man's journey full of sins and trials, which for some may end in conversion and redemption. Like Adam, Pinocchio undertook a journey to Hell. It is a symbolic hell in which Pinocchio is plagued by various misfortunes. During that journey, Pinocchio vacillated between evil and virtue: he spent time with villains and strived for a comfortable and easy life. It is a journey of suffering that ends with a transformation towards virtue. Just as everything has a price, there was a price for owning a human body. Through tribulation, Pinocchio was cleansed of sins.

## References

- [1] "The Impact of Pinocchio: Western European & North American Culture," *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. <https://curr538theadventuresofpinocchio.weebly.com/impact-on-culture.html> (accessed Aug. 08, 2021).
- [2] C. Lorenzini, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 2017, pp. 1–148.
- [3] Wikipedia Contributors, "Pinocchio," *Wikipedia*, Feb. 07, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinocchio> (accessed Aug. 03, 2021).
- [4] A.-A. Khader, "The 'Pinocchio Syndrome' A Trick Invented by Carlo Collodi to Classify the Lies of Humans. The Lying Long Nose," *Al-Ittihad Newspaper*, Nov. 2018, Accessed: Aug. 08, 2021. [Online]. Available: <https://www.alittihad.ae/article/73366/2018/>.
- [5] F. Nietzsche, *The Complete Works Of Friedrich Nietzsche*, 710th ed., vol. 7. New York: The Macmillan Company, pp. 131–143.
- [6] P. Bryant, "The Adventures of Pinocchio: Phases of the Quest," *prezi.com*, Oct. 12, 2015. <https://prezi.com/ljq-oys1goyg/the-adventures-of-pinocchio/> (accessed Oct. 05, 2021).
- [7] S. Samenow, "Pinocchio: The Transformation of a Criminal in the Making; A Story of Change and Redemption," *Psychology Today*, 2016. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/inside-the-criminal->

mind/201611/pinocchio-the-transformation-criminal- in-the-making (accessed Aug. 03, 2021).

[8] C. Collodi and N. J. Perella, *The Adventures of Pinocchio: Story of a Puppet*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005.

[9] "His Nose Was Not Long When Lying! This Is the True Story Behind Pinocchio," *Sasapost*, Jul. 01, 2019. <https://www.sasapost.com/truth-about-pinocchio-nose/> (accessed Aug. 13, 2021).

[10] "Discover Collodi and the Pinocchio Park, Garzoni Garden & the Butterfly House: Perfect for Children in Tuscany," <https://www.discovertuscany.com/pistoia/the-pinocchio-park-in-collodi.html> (accessed Oct. 17, 2021).

[11] H. Khattab, "Pinocchio Syndrome," *Khaberni*, Nov. 02, 2014. <https://www.khaberni.com/> (accessed Aug. 07, 2021).