# Revista Innova Educación

**ESSAY**

# A new perspective from English language teaching. Invisible learning and its contributions to foreign language acquisition

*Una nueva perspectiva desde la enseñanza de inglés. El aprendizaje invisible y sus aportes en la adquisición de una lengua extranjera*

Uma nova perspectiva do ensino de inglês. Aprendizagem invisível e suas contribuições para a aquisição de uma língua estrangeira

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ABSTRACT. "The invisible is not what does not exist, but what we cannot observe." The objective of this research is to determine the impact of the invisible learning of Moravec and Cobo (2011) on the acquisition of the English language. To this end, the available scientific literature was reviewed, proceeding later to argue the benefits of invisible learning in learning English with technological tools. The emergence of new technologies requires that teachers act innovatively by applying teaching strategies that facilitate the educational achievement of the student, developing social, reflective, and cognitive skills. Said learning is no longer only conceived as the incorporation of

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| technological tools, innovation. | new grammatical structures, but with the learning of a new culture. From the trial, it was possible to conclude that invisible learning shows a relevant role when learning a foreign language due to its characteristics that incorporate ICTs and gamification, which are highly accepted and motivating for students in the classroom. |

| PALABRAS CLAVE | |
|---|---|
| Aprendizaje de inglés, aprendizaje virtual, habilidades blandas, herramientas tecnológicas, innovación. | **RESUMEN.** "Lo invisible no es aquello que no existe, sino aquello que no podemos observar". El objetivo de la presente investigación fue determinar el impacto del aprendizaje invisible de Moravec y Cobo (2011) en la adquisición del idioma inglés. Para tal fin, se revisó la literatura científica disponible, procediendo después a argumentar los beneficios del aprendizaje invisible en el aprendizaje de inglés a través del uso de las herramientas tecnológicas. El surgimiento de las nuevas tecnologías exige que los docentes actúen de manera innovadora aplicando estrategias de enseñanza que faciliten el logro formativo del educando, desarrollando habilidades sociales, reflexivas y cognitivas. Dicho aprendizaje ya no solo se concibe como la incorporación de nuevas estructuras gramaticales, sino con el aprendizaje de una nueva cultura. A partir del ensayo, se pudo concluir que el aprendizaje invisible demuestra un rol relevante a la hora de aprender un idioma extranjero debido a sus características que incorporan las TICs y la gamificación, las cuales son altamente aceptadas y motivadoras para los alumnos en las aulas. |

| PALAVRAS-CHAVE | |
|---|---|
| Aprendizagem de inglês, aprendizagem virtual, soft skills, ferramentas tecnológicas, inovação. | **RESUMO.** "O invisível não é o que não existe, mas o que não podemos observar." O objetivo desta pesquisa foi determinar o impacto da aprendizagem invisível de Moravec e Cobo (2011) na aquisição da língua inglesa. Para tanto, foi realizada uma revisão da literatura científica disponível, procedendo-se posteriormente à discussão dos benefícios da aprendizagem invisível na aprendizagem do inglês por meio do uso de ferramentas tecnológicas. O surgimento de novas tecnologias exige que os professores atuem de forma inovadora, aplicando estratégias de ensino que facilitem a realização educacional do aluno, desenvolvendo habilidades sociais, reflexivas e cognitivas. Essa aprendizagem não é concebida apenas como incorporação de novas estruturas gramaticais, mas com a aprendizagem de uma nova cultura. A partir do ensaio, foi possível concluir que a aprendizagem invisível apresenta um papel relevante na aprendizagem de uma língua estrangeira devido às suas características que incorporam as TIC e a gamificação, as quais são altamente aceitas e motivadoras para os alunos em sala de aula. |

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The learning of a foreign language, such as English, is a fundamental and required skill for the achievement of competitiveness in this globalized era due to the different advantages it provides in economic, employment, academic and social fields. Knowing the importance of learning a second language, the concern of teachers is directed towards the knowledge of new and different pedagogical models, as well as methods and resources to improve the teaching-learning process of English. The yearning for innovation in this technological era is relevant, since as Moravec (2013) emphasizes this is the "knowmad society" or nomadic knowledge society, referring to the fact that today's students are dynamic and able to work anytime and anywhere. "With this society new challenges arise, where it is not enough just to know the new digital tools, but to create and innovate."(Valverde-Berrocoso & Balladares, 2017, p. 126).

The use of ICTs as tools to manage and treat educational information has generated a change in the perception of the teaching process, opting for meaningful and constructivist teaching models and consequently displacing the traditional approach (Llorente et al., 2016). According to such circumstances, Sosa et al. (2010) conclude that the application of ICTs in the educational process helps to improve the teaching-learning cycle. Similarly,

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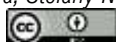
Aguilar (2012), mentions that ICTs allow leaving behind the traditional educational model, turning learning into meaningful, accessible, dynamic and flexible experiences in order to achieve English learning in students.

In this way, invisible learning generates a change in the education that has been imparted. Moravec & Cobo (2011), the authors of invisible learning, comment that their educational proposal is conceptualized as "a metatheory that intends to integrate different perspectives, where technological advances, formal, informal and non-formal education are considered, incorporating non-cognitive skills, in turn, developing competencies related to ICT" (p. 23). In this metatheory, importance is given to how to learn and not to what to learn; it also takes into account current demands, which lead to the use of ICT in the teaching-learning process. According to Drenoyianni (2006) ICTs are adaptable tools, and the use of computers allows students to gradually develop the relevant skills for information search and discernment between what they really need and what they do not.

Therefore, the need for the transformation of the teaching methodology must be carried out in content and form. By content we refer to grammatical rules, specific writing structures and conversational dialogues; while the form refers to how these classes are taught by teachers to students, enriched in different methodological aspects, without falling into the traditionalist methodology. Learning should be innovated so that students can use the English language at different moments of their lives, while the practice is related to the competencies proposed by the current educational curriculum.

For the reasons stated above, this essay primarily aimed to provide information on the impact of Moravec & Cobo (2011) invisible learning on English language acquisition by examining the existing evidence related to both topics.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

At the beginning of the research process, the Invisible Learning metatheory proposed by Moravec & Cobo (2011), was read and conceptualized in order to delimit the topic and review it, as well as to relate it to the teaching of English as a foreign language due to the scarce existence of studies referring to the two variables.

*Planning*

The purpose of the review is oriented from the manuscript "Introduction to invisible learning: the revolution outside the classroom" (Moravec & Cobo, 2011), for the analysis of the main axes of invisible learning in English language teaching. The following questions were defined for this research:

- *Main Question*

  According to the survey of studies on the subject, what is the main contribution of invisible learning in teaching English as a foreign language?

- *Complementary questions*

  What is the contribution of the invisible learning axes in teaching English as a foreign language?

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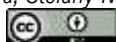
How does the use of technological tools contribute to the teaching of English from the invisible learning approach?

For the selection of studies, the following inclusion and exclusion criteria are taken into account, which are identified according to the questions and the object of the investigation:

*Inclusion criteria*
- Scientific article on invisible learning by Moravec and Cobo.
- Book on invisible learning by Moravec and Cobo.

*Exclusion criteria*
- Publications on invisible learning that include authors other than Moravec and/or Cobo.

*Research*

The selected academic databases were consulted, taking into account the main objective of the investigation. For this purpose, the book and article published by Moravec and Cobo on Invisible Learning were taken into consideration.

## 3. DEVELOPMENT

According to Moravec & Cobo (2011) Invisible Learning is a proto-paradigm of education, which integrates a diversity of approaches, as well as current topics such as information technologies, formal, informal and hidden modes of education, among others, that help to reformulate and transform the education of the future (p.68). In addition, the authors mention five main axes in Invisible Learning:

*Non-evident skills are invisible in formal settings*

Referring to skills that can be demonstrated by students at a young age or in the school period. These skills are not considered by teachers and institutions due to the use of traditional types of assessment that punish error and do not incorporate skills that are not included in the curriculum. This is supported in English language learning and is verified in the teaching practice where only grammar-based assessments are taken into account.

*ICTs become invisible*

People feel at ease and adapt easily to the technologies that are created when they are between 15 and 35 years old. After that period, the technologies that emerge become a challenge since the adaptation and updating to them cause a great learning effort. In this way, a problem in education to be solved becomes visible, in which teachers must be in a continuous updating and adaptation, making invisible the term "new technologies" and prioritizing the connection and creation of continuous knowledge.

*Skills acquired in informal environments are invisible*

The use of technologies tends to occur more in informal spaces than in education, therefore, it is necessary to analyze these spaces and the programs used in them, since they also generate knowledge and significant

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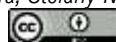
learning in students. Informal environments can be transformed into enriching educational spaces and promote continuous learning through the acquisition of habits.

*Digital skills are invisible*

Digital competencies are considered as important skills to develop, but at the same time they are little stimulated and ignored in the classroom. Considering the previous problem, it can also be found that schools try to teach how to use technologies in a way in which they are not acquired in a natural way. Therefore, it is necessary to make technologies invisible and concentrate more on the resolution and learning of certain contents through the use of ICTs, with students learning both aspects in an exploratory way, being the protagonists of learning.

*There are certain practices used at school/university that need to be made invisible.*

There are several educational practices that need to be modified, among them one is the use of memorization of information, which has been used in a way that is not in accordance with today's society, requiring students to memorize large amounts of information when these can be easily found and consulted on the Internet. Other problems such as assumptions that the use of technologies will generate higher academic performance in students just by applying them, or the incorporation of technologies with the same traditional approach, among others, are described in this axis. (Moravec & Cobo, 2011).

## Benefits of invisible learning in English learning

It is necessary to point out that because invisible learning is a recent metatheory, there were limitations in the process since no research on the topic related to English language learning was found for a literature review article. However, it was decided to examine different researches that incorporate characteristics related to invisible learning and to the improvement of English language teaching.

Invisible learning can be considered as an inclusive alternative, because it proposes ideas that seek to be adopted and adapted from a particular context. In addition, it prioritizes the student's active experiences and the development of soft skills, which when applied to English language teaching can help to promote the use of resources or tools which are different from the traditional ones, such as the use of new technologies.

Gallardo et al. (2014) argue that ICTs generate a new way of perception in students, which promotes the generation of competencies and new skills, significantly impacting their academic and social life; causing changes in perception, as well as the permanent interaction with technological devices considered as their own characteristics. In English language teaching, the use of ICTs is not present in its entirety, but it cannot and should not be absent, since applications, software and different digital platforms can be used to allow students to work on their learning, thus developing the competencies of the English course in a playful, autonomous and attractive way for them.

The book " Internet como recurso para enseñar y aprender: una aproximación práctica a la tecnología educativa", carried out in Spain, compiles activities for the integration of ICTs in the classroom. According to the results presented by the authors of the book Serrano et al. (2016), it is shown that more than a half of the students studied used mobile applications for language learning, which demonstrates the great interest and potential in

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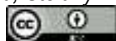
acquiring knowledge inside or outside the classroom and in a different way than the traditional one. Hence, the teacher can take advantage of this advantage and encourage the use of applications such as Duolingo for grammar and vocabulary reinforcement, or Cake for the development of listening and speaking skills in English.

Invisible learning also promotes instruction through gamification. Today's generation called "Digital Natives", a term coined by Prensky (2010), prefer to learn in a playful way rather than in the rigor of traditional work. For instance, the use of online tools such as Quizizz can be promoted, as it provides the opportunity to develop the activities in a dynamic way and at the same time to give feedback in a timely manner. Other advantages of Quizizz are that it does not require the student to have extensive prior knowledge of the topic to be covered, since it considers learning through the development of playful quizzes. The different images and music that can be incorporated into Quizizz exercises have a significant influence on students' motivation. Research such as the one by Laura et al. (2021) shows that the application of the Quizizz tool increased students' academic performance and improved creativity and group work skills in English learning.

Another benefit of invisible learning is the promotion of collaborative work, which helps English learning because students actively learn through learners' communities. In this way, interaction with others is allowed, sharing different points of view promoting the construction of knowledge in a different way than the one normally applied in the classroom and through different educational software adapted for language teaching, exclusively in English (Laura, 2019). According to Rojas (2015), the educational system needs to rethink and redefine itself in order to ensure that tomorrow's citizens obtain the necessary skills for their current and future development.

As seen previously, invisible learning highlights the importance of integrating lessons developed in informal environments. Without prior planning, it is a fact that many learners bet on language learning networks in different social platforms such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Telegram and so on. Sloep & Berlanga (2011) argue that the characteristics that integrate social networks are the exchange of knowledge and experiences, project work, debates, congresses, in addition to offering and receiving support from other members of the group for the absolution of doubts and for a group evaluation. There is a growing amount of research on the influence of social networks on the development of language learning skills., for example, Infante & Ramírez (2017) mention in their research that the social network Facebook proved to have a significant impact on English learning when comparing the results with the control group. That is why it is important for teachers to consider this reality, and to encourage study habits in learners who tend to acquire skills through everyday actions such as checking social networks and chatting with friends.

Didactic resources are those that are present in the teaching-learning process thanks to their usefulness and effectiveness in the educational process. These resources have an influence on the teacher for the elaboration, planning or orientation in all his activities, as well as in attracting the students' attention in order to improve the educational quality and the achievement of the objectives. The value of each of these didactic resources forms a hierarchy in which the various means provide to specify those resources that are more related to the content that the teacher will develop (Torres & García, 2019). In invisible learning it is necessary to consider the functioning of each didactic resource for the management of the content to be developed in classes, because a proper choice and planning during that moment will mean the success obtained at the end of the learning session and the success of the resource as a motivating and innovative tool for students.

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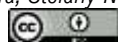
According to Moravec & Cobo (2011) The expression "do it yourself" should be adopted in today's education, as it has gained interest for the innovation of resources and digital content on the Internet, which should not necessarily be generated by teachers but also by students. For example, in English learning, the production of virtual books and comics with tools such as Pixton and Book Creator, which not only improve students' motivation, but also their writing and reading skills in English, applying gamification elements to motivate participation and self-learning, are becoming more relevant (Laura et al., 2020).

In invisible learning, the role of the teacher is often confused as being absent and taking a secondary role without much demand for students to develop their learning. There is also a misconception that the teaching method used in this pedagogy is simpler and easier. However, for this pedagogy to be effective, teachers are required to step out of their comfort zone, out of the traditional, changing their role to a disrupter to create situations and experiences that provide their students with new challenges in their learning, but at the same time inspire them to achieve the desired learning. On the other hand, Concari (2014) alludes to "disruptive technologies" and states that "when digital technologies are incorporated into the classroom, the teacher may have to cede some of his or her authority to enable better learning."

It is expected that results such as those obtained by Torres y Cobo (2017) disappear or at least decrease, given that in their research they mention that there is an incongruence between the perspective of the teaching role and the student by undergraduate students of the teaching career. Thus, in their research, when they surveyed these future teachers about the characteristics they would apply in their pedagogical practice, they were oriented towards the traditional model, while when surveyed from the student's role, they showed a clear preference for student-centered and therefore non-traditional teaching. This shows that many teachers, despite being aware of the need for innovation in learning, decide to opt for simpler and more comfortable methodologies.

Invisible learning replaces traditional teaching and rote learning with experiential learning (Moravec & Cobo, 2011), focusing on more creative and innovative ways to seek and find solutions to a problem, on soft skills, rather than a typical repetition of previously learned information. Teachers must allow students to interact and take an active role in class, moving from teacher-centered teaching to teaching for and by students. There are many methods to involve students in the teaching of classes in a non face-to-face way, for example, the use of tools such as Mentimeter has become relevant because it allows to know the opinions of students automatically through surveys or brainstorming. Other tools such as Peardeck and Nearpod allow visualizing student participation in an organized written form while presenting slides to students, as well as the use of drawing tools and 3D images.

Finally, invisible learning recognizes that it is necessary to make mistakes during learning. According to Hiraldo (2013), Roger Schank states: "Learning occurs when someone wants to learn, not when someone wants to teach" and Briceño (2015) complements by emphasizing that the cognitive and pedagogical aspects involved between error - learning should be taken into consideration, where the presence of error in this process should be scrupulously taken in context, valued and validated as it is an tacit element in the production of knowledge. Error must cease to be seen as a negative element in language learning, since the motivation and practice factor must be constant for language acquisition.

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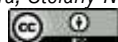
## 4. CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that invisible learning has a great relevance for English language learning since its characteristics have an emphasis on learning through games and ICTs, being valuable and useful in the classroom due to its high acceptance and motivation by students. In this way, teachers are invited to change the perspective of English teaching by incorporating technologies, allowing the active participation of students for the creation of their own knowledge and a rethinking of the educational potential that can be found in everyday actions such as social networks. Teachers must have such a vision and creativity that they can create any environment into a productive place for education. Finally, it should be noted that a deeper analysis of the proposal of invisible learning can provide new and interesting results not only for learning a language but also for other subjects, but this can only happen if the teacher develops a capacity for research and innovation in teaching, always bearing in mind that the work of the teacher is based on the holistic development of the student, as a service work for the change of the future society through their training.

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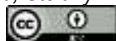
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