



Press release

busuu.com to the rescue of Silbo Gomero!

busuu.com, the online community for learning languages, is now offering the possibility to learn a nearly extinct language from the Spanish Canary Islands.

Madrid, 6th of October 2008 –Until now, the users of busuu.com have been able to improve their Spanish, German, French and English skills completely for free and in an interactive way on the website. Now, busuu.com has a new language to offer: the fascinating whistled language of Silbo Gomero.

Silbo Gomero is a nearly extinct language spoken on the small island of La Gomera, one of the Canary Islands in Spain. Little is known of the origins of this language, but it had apparently been in use for centuries by natives before being adapted to Castilian Spanish by settlers in the 16th century. Communication was difficult due to the mountainous landscape of the island and so this whistled language was used as a means of communication. Spoken messages can be heard up to a distance of 200 metres but Silbo Gomero can be heard and understood up to a distance of 8 kilometers. Silbo uses vowels and consonants like most languages and so it can be directly translated into Spanish. So in theory almost any language can be whistled.

“We found the story of Silbo Gomero simply fascinating” says Bernhard Niesner, Co-Founder of busuu.com, “and we wanted to contribute to the preservation of this nearly extinct language.” From the beginning of October, busuu.com is offering [learning material about Silbo](#) on its website. Additionally, the Madrid based start-up has produced a video available to see on [You Tube](#) to increase the popularity of this language. “Learning a new language with busuu.com is mobile, flexible and highly interactive – so why shouldn’t this work with a nearly extinct language?” asks Adrian Hilti, second Co-Founder of this website.

About busuu.com

busuu.com is a free online community for learning languages. Users have access to audio-visual learning material covering several topics. Additionally, language skills can be directly improved together with native speakers from around the world. Users connect via an integrated video-chat with other users of the community while at home. Each user is not only “student” of a foreign language but also a “teacher” of his own mother tongue.

The start-up was founded in Madrid at the beginning of 2008. The name of the site comes from the Busuu language of Cameroon, which according to an ethnological study from the 80ies is only spoken by 8 people.

About the founders

Bernhard Niesner (29), born in Vienna, Austria, is responsible for Marketing & Sales at busuu.com. Before founding the company he worked for the international strategy consulting firm Roland Berger Strategy Consultants. During his international MBA at the prestigious ‘Instituto de Empresa’ in Madrid, he met his current business partner Adrian Hilti. Bernhard speaks his mother tongue German, fluent English and Spanish and is currently improving his Brazilian Portuguese.



Adrian Hilti (34), from Liechtenstein, a small country in the heart of Europe, is responsible for IT & Operations within busuu.com. He worked for the strategy consulting firm Arthur D. Little before founding busuu.com. Additionally, he gained experience in the Swiss High-Tech company Shockfish. Adrian also completed an international MBA at the 'Instituto de Empresa' where the initial idea for busuu.com was developed. Adrian speaks fluent German, French and English and is currently improving his Spanish.

Press-Contact:

Bernhard Niesner, Co-Founder of busuu.com

Tel: +34 695 236 202

email: bernhard@busuu.com