

The Tech Startup Pitch & Investment Negotiation

Target Level: Upper-Intermediate to Advanced (B2–C1)	Duration: 60 – 75 Minutes	Class Size: Pair Work (Extensible to Trios)
Focus Skill: Speaking & Persuasive Negotiation	Context: Business / Corporate Strategy	Teacher/Author: Giovanna Azuni

1. AIMS & LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Primary Aim: To enable advanced learners to articulate strategic business propositions, defend risk mitigation strategies, and negotiate financial/contractual terms in a high-stakes professional setting.

Specific Objectives: By the end of this session, students will be able to:

- Utilize diplomatic and persuasive language to pitch an innovative concept and negotiate investment terms.
- Employ hedging structures and conditional statements (e.g., *"Provided that..."*, *"Should we proceed..."*) to make conditional concessions.
- Challenge counteroffers professionally and handle critical inquiry under pressure.

2. TARGET LANGUAGE FOCUS

Communicative Function	Target Phrases & Structures
Pitching & Value Proposition	• "Our core value proposition lies in..." • "What sets this technology apart from existing market solutions is..." • "We have projected a scalable growth trajectory of..."
Proposing Terms & Conditions	• "We are prepared to offer a [X]% equity stake in exchange for..." • "Subject to due diligence, we would be willing to commit..." • "Provided that you meet our Q3 milestones, we can extend..."
Tactful Pushback & Counter-proposals	• "With respect, that valuation doesn't quite align with our financial modeling." • "I see your point; however, from an operational standpoint..." • "Would you consider a tiered investment structure based on key deliverables?"

3. STEP-BY-STEP LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up & Schema Building (10 mins): Lead a brief discussion on tech investments and shark-tank style pitches. Elicit key vocabulary related to funding (e.g., *valuation*, *venture capital*, *equity*, *ROI*, *burn rate*).

2. Target Language Input (15 mins): Introduce and drill persuasive and diplomatic negotiation phrases. Contrast direct/confrontational phrasing with diplomatic alternatives.

3. Setup & Role Allocation (10 mins): Divide the class into pairs. Assign **Student A (The Entrepreneur)** and **Student B (The Venture Capitalist)**. Hand out the respective Role Cards and secret briefing prompts. Allow 5 minutes for individual preparation and note-taking.

4. Role Play Execution (20 mins): Students conduct the negotiation meeting. Student A pitches the startup and asks for funding; Student B scrutinizes the model, challenges assumptions, and negotiates equity/terms. Both attempt to reach a signed agreement.

5. Feedback & Language Analysis (10–15 mins): Pairs report back on whether a deal was struck and on what terms. The teacher provides delayed language feedback, highlighting excellent usage of diplomatic phrasing and correcting recurring errors.

4. PRINTABLE STUDENT ROLE CARDS

ROLE CARD A: THE STARTUP FOUNDER (ECOTECH SOLUTIONS)

Context: You are the founder of an AI-driven waste management startup seeking expansion funding.

Your Objectives:

- Secure ****\$500,000**** in capital in exchange for ****no more than 15%**** equity in your company.
- Justify your current high valuation based on your proprietary algorithm and secured pilot contracts with 3 major municipalities.
- Retain complete operational control and decision-making authority over future software development.

Key Constraints & Strategy: You cannot accept an equity offer exceeding 20% under any circumstances, as it would dilute existing founders' voting rights. Be prepared to offer advisory board seats instead of higher equity.

ROLE CARD B: THE VENTURE CAPITALIST (APEX CAPITAL)

Context: You are a partner at a prominent venture capital firm specializing in green technologies.

Your Objectives:

- Acquire at least a ****25% equity stake**** for a ****\$500,000**** investment, as you consider the market highly volatile.
- Secure a seat on the executive board with veto power over major strategic decisions and future debt financing.
- Implement a tranche-based funding schedule tied strictly to monthly operational metrics.

Key Constraints & Strategy: You believe the founder's valuation is overly optimistic. Push hard on risk factors (regulatory hurdles, market competition). Do not commit full capital upfront without milestone guarantees.

