Module 1: Business Communication Fundamentals

Module goal: By the end of Module 1, a student can meet a new international business contact — at a conference, on a sales call, or in a Slack DM — and make a confident, memorable, professionally fluent first impression, entirely in English, under mild real-time pressure (interruptions, follow-up questions, small talk).

Module CEFR band: B1 (entry) → B2 (exit) **Module capstone:** *The Fintech Meetup Simulation* (below)

Structure per lesson: **Pre-Task → Language Bank → Model Dialogue → Russian–English Interference Bridge → Controlled Practice → Task Cycle (communicative task) → Roleplay → Language Focus & Correction → Extension/Homework → Assessment Criteria.**

Lesson 1.1 — Introducing Yourself Professionally

Can-do objective (B1→B2): *Can introduce myself in a business context with name, role, company, and a memorable value statement, adapting register between formal (conference) and informal (Slack/Telegram) settings.*

Pre-task: Students are shown two real-world openers with no context: - "Hi, I'm from a fintech company." - "Hi, I'm Anna — I lead partnerships at Northbridge Pay, we help e-commerce platforms cut card-decline rates. Great to meet you." Students discuss in pairs: which one makes you want to keep talking, and *why specifically* — not just "the second one is better."

Language bank

Function	Phrase
Name + role	"I'm [name], I [head up / lead / work on] [function] at [company]."
One-line value statement	"We help [audience] [do X] by [doing Y]."
Formal opener	"It's a pleasure to meet you." / "Thanks for making the time."
Informal opener	"Hey, great to connect!" / "Thanks for hopping on."
Bridging to purpose	"I wanted to reach out because…"
Inviting reciprocity	"And what brings you to [event/call]?"

Model dialogue — Conference setting

> ***Daniil:*** *Hi — Daniil, I run business development at Vanta Pay. We help mid-size marketplaces reduce checkout drop-off.*
>
> ***Contact:*** *Nice to meet you, Daniil. What kind of drop-off are we talking about?*
>
> ***Daniil:*** *On average, about 18% at the payment step alone — usually failed authorizations or unsupported*

> *local methods. That's what we fix.*
>
> ***Contact:*** *Interesting — is that mostly a Europe problem or global?*
>
> ***Daniil:*** *Both, actually, but it's sharper in cross-border transactions. Are you dealing with cross-border checkout at the moment?*

Russian–English Interference Bridge

✕ Direct translation from Russian	✓ Natural business English	Why
"My name is Daniil, I work like a Head of BD."	"I'm Daniil, I work as Head of BD."	"like" is a false-friend translation of "как"; native English uses "as" for roles
"I am working in fintech company."	"I work at a fintech company."	Missing article; "work in" + industry, "work at" + named company
"We are engaged in reducing drop-off."	"We help reduce drop-off." / "We focus on reducing drop-off."	"engaged in" is stiff, bureaucratic-sounding translation of "занимаемся"
"Let me introduce myself, I am Daniil."	"Hi, I'm Daniil."	Overly formal opener sounds translated, not natural in most international business contexts (exception: very formal/diplomatic settings)

Controlled practice: Students write and drill three versions of their own 10-second introduction: (1) formal/conference, (2) informal/Slack, (3) a version for someone in their *specific* sub-industry (fintech/crypto/AI). Peer feedback focuses only on catching the interference patterns above.

Task cycle (communicative task): "60-Second Mixer" — students circulate (physically or on video, breakout-style) and must introduce themselves to 4 different partners in 60 seconds each, adjusting register based on a card they're given ("this is a formal investor," "this is a casual peer at an afterparty").

Roleplay — Fintech conference booth: One student plays a visitor to a conference booth; the other is staffing it. The "staff" student must introduce themselves, deliver the value statement, and handle one unexpected follow-up question the partner improvises.

Language focus & correction: Teacher/AI coach reviews recordings for: article errors (a/the), false-friend verbs ("engaged in," "realize" for "реализовать"), and register mismatches (formal opener in a casual context or vice versa).

Extension/homework: Record a 30-second video introduction as if meeting a new international client on LinkedIn video. Submit for AI Business English Coach feedback (or teacher feedback in the live-only version).

Assessment criteria (mapped to the 5-band rubric): - Band 3 (Competent): Delivers accurate self-introduction with value statement, minor interference errors - Band 4 (Professional): Adjusts register fluently between formal/informal without prompting, handles one follow-up question naturally - Band 5: Introduction is memorable and idiomatic — sounds like a fluent professional peer, not a rehearsed script

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Lesson 1.2 — Describing Your Role

Can-do objective (B1→B2): *Can describe my day-to-day responsibilities and scope of authority clearly enough that an international colleague or client understands what I actually do and decide.*

Pre-task: Students rank three role descriptions from vaguest to clearest: - "I do many things related to sales." - "I'm responsible for sales." - "I own outbound sales for our EU market — from prospecting through to closing the first contract." Discussion: what specifically makes the third one useful to someone deciding whether to keep talking to you?

Language bank

Function	Phrase
Scope of ownership	"I own / I'm responsible for / I'm in charge of…"
Reporting line	"I report to…" / "I work closely with…"
Team size/structure	"I lead a team of…" / "I work as part of a team that…"
Decision authority	"I have the final say on…" / "That would need sign-off from…"
Describing scope precisely	"My focus is specifically on…, rather than…"

Russian–English Interference Bridge

✕ Interference	✓ Natural form	Why
"I am responsible for a question of payments."	"I'm responsible for payments." / "…for the payments function."	"question of" is a direct calque of "вопрос" and rarely used this way in English
"In our company exists a department for that."	"We have a department for that." / "That falls under [department]."	Literal translation of "существует"; English restructures with "there is" or possession
"I decide many questions."	"I handle a lot of decisions." / "I make the call on a lot of things."	"questions" as a stand-in for "issues/decisions" is a very common calque

Controlled practice: Fill-in exercise converting 8 vague role statements into precise ones using the language bank; then students write their own real role in 2 versions — one for a peer, one for a potential client who needs to know if they're "the decision-maker."

Task cycle: "Who Do I Talk To?" — in groups of 4, each student describes their role without naming their job title; the group must guess what decisions that person can and can't make, then check against reality.

Roleplay: A partner-company call where the counterpart asks, "So who would actually sign off on a pilot — you, or someone above you?" Student must answer honestly and professionally, redirecting if needed ("That would go to our COO, but I run point on the evaluation.").

Language focus & correction: Focus on precision of scope language ("I own" vs. "I'm involved in" vs. "I support") — Russian often flattens these into one general phrase; English business culture uses them to signal exact authority, which affects how seriously a counterpart takes the conversation.

Extension/homework: Write a 3-sentence role description for a LinkedIn "About" section.

Assessment criteria: Band 4 requires accurate, specific scope-of-authority language used spontaneously when challenged ("so are you the decision maker?") without defaulting to vague hedging.

Lesson 1.3 — Explaining Your Company

Can-do objective (B2): *Can explain what my company is (size, market, stage, position) in a way that builds credibility with an international counterpart in under 30 seconds.*

Pre-task: Compare two company descriptions and identify what credibility signals the second one gives that the first doesn't: - "We are a big and modern company in the sphere of finance." - "We're a Series B fintech based in Amsterdam — about 140 people, processing payments for around 3,000 e-commerce merchants across Europe."

Language bank

Function	Phrase
Stage/size	"We're a [seed/Series A/B/C, or 'profitable/bootstrapped'] company with about [X] people."
Market position	"We're one of the leading providers of… in [region]." / "We're a challenger in…"
Scale/proof	"We currently process/serve/support…"

Positioning against competitors	"Unlike [category], we focus specifically on…"

Russian–English Interference Bridge

✕ Interference	✓ Natural form	Why
"Our company is engaged in the sphere of finance."	"We operate in the fintech space." / "We're a fintech company."	"sphere" is a direct translation of "сфера" — rarely used in English business register
"We have very big experience on the market."	"We have a strong track record in this market."	"big experience" is a common calque of "большой опыт"; English collocates "extensive/strong" with "experience"
"Our company was founded in 2018 year."	"Our company was founded in 2018."	Redundant "year" after a date — direct habit from Russian date phrasing

Controlled practice: Students research (or are given) 3 real fintech companies' "About" pages and rewrite the corporate-jargon version into a 20-second spoken pitch a human could actually say out loud in a meeting.

Task cycle: Students write and deliver their own company's 20-second description twice — once optimizing for credibility with an investor, once for a potential client — noting what changes and why.

Roleplay: "Elevator between floors" — a 45-second constrained roleplay where a student must explain their company to a stranger before the elevator "arrives," including one clarifying question the partner asks.

Language focus & correction: Precision with numbers and scale language (avoiding "very big," "a lot of," in favor of specific figures or concrete comparators).

Extension/homework: Write the company description as it would appear in a cold outreach email opening line (ties forward to Module 9).

Lesson 1.4 — Explaining What Your Company Does

Can-do objective (B2): *Can explain, without jargon collapse, what my company's product/service actually does and for whom — adjusting technical depth to the listener.*

Pre-task: Students hear/read two explanations of the same product — one collapsed into jargon ("we provide an end-to-end orchestration layer for omnichannel payment reconciliation"), one in plain, precise English ("we help finance teams match thousands of incoming payments to the right invoices automatically, instead of doing it by hand in spreadsheets"). Discuss: which one would you trust more from a stranger, and why.

Language bank

Function	Phrase
Problem-first framing	"The problem we solve is…"
Plain-English product description	"In simple terms, we [verb] so that [audience] doesn't have to [pain]."
Audience-specific framing	"For a finance team, that means…" / "For a developer, that means…"
Avoiding jargon collapse	"Rather than get into the technical details, the short version is…"

Russian–English Interference Bridge

✕ Interference	✓ Natural form	Why
"Our product realizes the function of automatic reconciliation."	"Our product automates reconciliation."	"realize a function" is a literal translation of "реализует функцию" — English prefers direct verbs over "realize + noun"
"We give possibility to clients to…"	"We let clients… / We enable clients to…"	"give possibility" is a calque of "даём возможность"

"It is doing automatically."	"It's fully automated." / "It happens automatically."	Verb-tense/structure interference; English prefers adjective or simple present here

Controlled practice: "Explain it to a 12-year-old, then to a CFO" — students give the same product explanation at two technical depths, drilling the skill of *deliberately* adjusting complexity rather than defaulting to jargon when unsure.

Task cycle: Given 4 real (anonymized) fintech/crypto product descriptions full of jargon, students rewrite each into a plain-English version a smart non-specialist would understand in one hearing.

Roleplay: A confused-client roleplay — the "client" repeatedly says "sorry, what does that actually mean?" and the student must simplify further each time without becoming condescending.

Language focus & correction: Distinguishing "automate" / "streamline" / "simplify" / "optimize" — commonly confused or overused interchangeably by non-native speakers; each has a distinct, correct business use.

Extension/homework: Write two versions (technical / plain-English) of a one-paragraph product description for the company website.

Lesson 1.5 — Small Talk

Can-do objective (B1→B2): *Can initiate, sustain, and gracefully exit small talk in a professional international context, including navigating culturally safe vs. unsafe topics.*

Pre-task: Students list small talk topics they'd use with a Russian colleague, then discuss which of those might feel intrusive, political, or simply confusing to an international counterpart (e.g., salary, marital status, age — all more commonly discussed in some cultures than others). This is a genuine cross-cultural competence gap, not just a language one.

Language bank

Function	Phrase
Safe openers	"How was your flight/trip in?" / "Have you been to [city] before?" / "How's the conference going for you so far?"
Sustaining	"Oh really — what took you there?" / "That's interesting, how long have you been doing that?"
Weather/logistics (safe filler)	"Quite a change in weather from [their city], I'd imagine."
Exiting gracefully	"Well, I should let you get back to it — great talking to you." / "I don't want to keep you — let's catch up properly later."

Russian–English Interference Bridge

✕ Interference / cultural mismatch	✓ Natural form	Why
"How old are you? Are you married?" as opener	Avoid entirely in first meetings with unfamiliar international contacts	Common in Russian social small talk; often unwelcome or seen as intrusive in Western/international business contexts
"What is your salary?"	Avoid	Considered highly private in most English-speaking business cultures
Very short, transactional answers with no follow-up question	Always return the question: "...and you?" / "What about yourself?"	Russian professional register can read as blunt/direct in English; reciprocal questions signal warmth

Controlled practice: "Safe or unsafe?" card sort — students sort 15 small talk topics into safe/context-

dependent/avoid for an international business setting, then justify their choices.

Task cycle: Timed small talk chains — pairs must keep a small talk exchange going for 90 seconds using only safe topics, with a natural exit at the end.

Roleplay: Conference coffee-break scenario — one student must both make small talk *and* look for a natural bridge into a business topic without being abrupt (ties directly into Lesson 1.6).

Language focus & correction: Reciprocal questioning patterns, and softening direct statements ("I disagree" → "I see it a bit differently, actually").

Extension/homework: Write 5 small talk openers tailored to a specific upcoming context the student has in real life (a conference, a client call).

Lesson 1.6 — Networking

Can-do objective (B2): *Can work a room (physical or virtual) with intention — starting conversations, exchanging value, and following up — without it feeling transactional or awkward.*

Pre-task: Students discuss: what's the difference between networking that feels "used" and networking that feels genuinely valuable to both sides? This frames the entire lesson around the strategic skill, not just the language.

Language bank

Function	Phrase
Approaching someone new	"Mind if I join you?" / "I couldn't help overhearing — are you also in payments?"
Finding common ground	"Small world — we actually work with a few companies in that space too."
Offering value before asking for it	"If it's useful, I'm happy to send over…"
Asking to stay in touch	"Would it be alright if I connected with you on LinkedIn?"
Following up (bridges to Module 9)	"Great meeting you — following up as promised, here's…"

Russian–English Interference Bridge

✕ Interference	✓ Natural form	Why
"Give me your contact, please."	"Could I get your contact details?" / "Would you mind sharing your LinkedIn?"	Direct imperative form ("give me") reads as blunt in English; softened requests are the professional norm
"I want that we will cooperate."	"I'd love to explore how we might work together."	Literal future-tense calque; English uses softer hypothetical framing for early-stage networking
No small talk before business ask	Always sequence: small talk → common ground → soft business bridge	Jumping straight to the ask reads as transactional in most international business cultures

Controlled practice: Sequencing exercise — students put a scrambled 6-step networking exchange (approach → small talk → common ground → value offer → soft ask → graceful close) into the correct order and identify why order matters.

Task cycle: "Room-working" simulation — a multi-person mixer (4–8 students) where each person has a goal card (e.g., "find someone who might need a payments partner") and must network organically to achieve it within 8 minutes.

Roleplay / Module Capstone bridge: Direct rehearsal for the Module 1 Capstone below.

Language focus & correction: Softened requests (modal verbs — "could," "would," "might") replacing direct imperatives; this is one of the highest-leverage corrections for Russian-speaking professionals in English

business culture generally, and will recur in Modules 5, 6, and 8.

Extension/homework: Draft a LinkedIn connection-request message following a hypothetical real networking encounter.

MODULE 1 CAPSTONE — The Fintech Meetup Simulation

Format: A simulated evening networking event at an international fintech conference (30–40 minutes, small group of 4–6 students + teacher/AI coach playing multiple roles).

Sequence students must execute, unscripted, end-to-end: 1. Approach a stranger and introduce themselves (1.1) 2. Describe their role with appropriate precision (1.2) 3. Explain their company credibly (1.3) 4. Explain what their company does, adjusting for the listener's background (1.4) 5. Sustain natural small talk, including a graceful pivot (1.5) 6. Exchange contact information and set up a follow-up (1.6)

Scoring: Each of the 6 functions is scored independently on the 5-band rubric (Part A), producing a Module 1 profile the student can directly compare to their pre-course diagnostic. The capstone is recorded so students hear their own before/after — this recording is also the raw material for the testimonial pipeline in the go-to-market plan.

Practice This Module

This module's capstone — **"The Fintech Meetup Simulation"** — is available right now in the AI Business English Coach. Once you've worked through the lessons above, practice the full scenario with live, unscripted AI roleplay and instant, structured feedback on your English and (where relevant) your technical accuracy.

→ Practice "The Fintech Meetup Simulation" now