Calls grow to slow AI progress

LEVEL C1


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I. WARM-UP

1. Where do you already use AI in daily life?
2. What risks from AI worry you the most, if any?
3. When is it wise to pause a fast-moving technology?

II. KEY VOCABULARY

existential
Describing a threat so serious that it could end human life or society.

slowdown
A deliberate reduction in speed or progress.

enforce
To make sure a rule or plan is followed by using authority.

transparent
Open and honest so that others can see what is happening.

regulation
Official rules made by authorities to control an activity.

vulnerable
Open to harm or attack; not well protected.

revenue
Money a company or organisation earns from its activities.

backfire
To have the opposite effect from the one intended.

III. READING

A growing group of industry leaders now says AI should slow down. Anthropic's chief, Dario Amodei, urged a slowdown, and rivals Sam Altman of OpenAI and Elon Musk signalled support. Some staff fear existential risks: ex-Anthropic researcher Jacob Coxon told the BBC they were "genuinely frightened".

Yet a pause is hard to enforce. Firms also face a US–China race for leadership. Companies worry they would be left behind. Amodei has suggested independent monitoring of models, industry-wide regulation, and global regulation. However, critics ask who would police such rules and whether firms would be transparent.

Some also warn that stopping model training could leave firms vulnerable to Chinese rivals. In the UK, AI is central to growth plans, so a slowdown could hurt prospects. Meanwhile, the industry burns cash and energy, while revenue lags. Some adopters report disappointment, and economists warn the bubble could burst.

OpenAI has paused its march toward a listing. Alexander Voica of Synthesia warns that rushing into strict rules could backfire, since future uses remain uncertain.

Reading text adapted from reporting by **BBC News***: "Questions mount over what an AI 'slowdown'...". Original article linked at theenglishwire.com.*

IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who first urged a slowdown in AI development?
2. Which two rivals publicly backed the call to slow down?
3. Which rivalry makes a pause hard to enforce?
4. What three measures did Amodei propose for managing AI?
5. Why does Alexander Voica warn against strict rules now?

V. DISCUSSION

1. Should governments or companies lead any AI slowdown? Why?
2. Would a pause harm innovation more than it protects safety?
3. How could transparency about AI projects be made credible?
4. What might a burst AI bubble change in your country?

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Formal multiword connectors

Formal multiword connectors are fixed phrases used in formal writing (e.g. legal or policy contexts). You must use the whole phrase in the correct order because small changes make them ungrammatical.

"Industry leaders urged a slowdown **owing to** *the risks."*

"Firms lobbied **with a view to** *shaping global regulation."*

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. Critics raised doubts with respect (to / of) transparency. _____
2. Regulators acted (insofar of / insofar as) risks were clear. _____
3. Firms should train models in accordance (with / to) the rules. _____
4. Many object (in / on) the grounds that new rules may backfire. _____
5. Some labs may pause on account (for / of) safety fears. _____

Teacher's Notes

TEACHERS ONLY

These notes are designed to help you get the most out of this lesson. Please do not share this page with students.


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I. LESSON GUIDE

- Timing: 8–10 minutes warm-up, 10 minutes vocabulary, 12–15 minutes reading and comprehension, 10 minutes grammar, 12–15 minutes discussion.
- Pre-teach nuances around existential, enforce, regulation, and backfire; check pronunciation of Amodei, Altman, and Synthesia.
- Run a first silent read for gist, then a second for detail. The topic touches geopolitics and fears about human survival; begin discussion in pairs and tell students they may talk about the news rather than about themselves.
- Differentiate by role: assign half the class to argue for a slowdown using monitoring and regulation, and half to argue against it due to competition and innovation, then swap sides for rebuttals.

II. DISCUSSION FACILITATION TIPS

1. Poll the room quickly, then pair students with someone who disagrees and ask for two reasons.
2. Elicit expected benefits and risks on the board, then require examples for each claim.
3. Model one concrete disclosure method first, then ask pairs to refine it with pros and cons.
4. Have students predict one winner and one loser, and justify with an industry example.

III. EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Debate: In teams, prepare 90-second opening statements for or against an AI slowdown, then rebut.

Writing: Write a 120-word brief advising a UK minister on risks if firms pause AI development.

IV. ANSWER KEY OVERVIEW

Comprehension questions: short factual answers from the text.

Grammar exercise: Formal multiword connectors

Discussion: open-ended. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

Answer Key

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IV. COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. Who first urged a slowdown in AI development?
   Dario Amodei, the chief of Anthropic.
2. Which two rivals publicly backed the call to slow down?
   Sam Altman of OpenAI and Elon Musk.
3. Which rivalry makes a pause hard to enforce?
   The US–China race for AI leadership.
4. What three measures did Amodei propose for managing AI?
   Independent monitoring, industry-wide regulation, and global regulation.
5. Why does Alexander Voica warn against strict rules now?
   He says it could backfire because future uses remain uncertain.

V. DISCUSSION

Open answers. Accept any reasonable ideas supported by examples and reasoning.

VII. GRAMMAR EXERCISE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. Critics raised doubts with respect (to / of) transparency. **to**
2. Regulators acted (insofar of / insofar as) risks were clear. **insofar as**
3. Firms should train models in accordance (with / to) the rules. **with**
4. Many object (in / on) the grounds that new rules may backfire. **on**
5. Some labs may pause on account (for / of) safety fears. **of**

VI. GRAMMAR FOCUS

Key point: Formal multiword connectors are fixed phrases used in formal writing (e.g. legal or policy contexts). You must use the whole phrase in the correct order because small changes make them ungrammatical. (Examples constructed.)

> *"Industry leaders urged a slowdown* **owing to** *the risks."*
>
> *"Firms lobbied* **with a view to** *shaping global regulation."*