Hello everybody, my name is Bartek and I am a member of the Elephant project team.

Today I would like to share with you my two realisations - two things I have learnt after teaching online for almost 3 years and after working on this project.

No. 1 is how I answer the question: What is more effective? Online teaching or face-to-face teaching? I am sure that you all have your preference, but I strongly believe, that there is no answer to that question. It all depends on how you design your lesson, not methods chosen. That’s what makes it effective, not the mode. I am sure that many of you have realised that we cannot just simply use the same lesson plan online and onsite. Even though we teach the same thing, the exact same topic, we use completely different methods and approaches. We redesign the whole lesson.

Many teachers say that the only way to properly convey knowledge is to do it face-to-face. I think, however, that they might just not know how to redesign their lessons to make them effective. I definitely agree that face-to-face teaching has many advantages, but we should also remember that it has MANY shortcomings, and these shortcomings often disappear in an online environment. And that’s what we should focus on. So, the question should not be what is more effective. We should ask ourself how to redesign our lesson to make effective, what methods to use and, finally, what is a teacher’s role in an online environment.

And this leads me directly to my 2nd realisation. The times have changes and now teachers (especially those who teach online) are no longer gurus who know everything, teachers are advisors, facilitators, helpers. They should guide students, not instruct them. And that’s what online teaching is great for. We finally stop being all-knowing gurus and become helpers. In an online environment, we quickly realise that lecturing or instructing our students is not the best method. If students are not actively involved in the learning process, we lose them momentarily.

If you want to take just one thing from that video, remember this: Your students should be sweating after your online class, not you! This realisation changed everything in my online teaching career. I realised that students’ collaboration and teacher’s facilitating role should be the basis in an online environment. We need to switch to a more student-centred approach, and for me that’s collaborative learning.

A great example of collaboration is the introduction of project-based learning in an online environment, which is described in our toolbox. You can find many examples for PBL activities there, but my personal favourites are activities called Let’s study together and how to interpret news. By using PBL, you engage your students and facilitate their learning process.

Collaborative learning is also great for discussions and debates. You can find information on how to introduce discussions and debates in an online environment in our toolbox. I strongly recommend the Let’s pre-debate activity. It’s a great way to help students find arguments and gain confidence before an actual debate.

So, let’s get back to my 2 realisations.

First of all, both face-to-face teaching and online teaching can be effective. We just need to realise that the same lesson needs to be conducted differently in a face-to-face mode and online. When we adjust it, we start noticing that online teaching can be as effective as face-to-face teaching.

And secondly, online teaching requires a significant shift into student-centred approach. Let’s give our students space to learn collaboratively. Remember that they are somewhere far away learning on their own. So, the more you involve them, the more you support them, the more you facilitate their learning process, the more effective your classes will be. Changing our own role (from lecturers to facilitators) is often one of the most difficult challenges that we face as teachers.

I hope you will enjoy working with the toolbox and it will give you lots of inspiration for your classes.