



Task-based Autoethnographic Pedagogical Approach: a phenomenological inquiry into online learning of Critical Food Studies courses

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Abstract

The disengaging experiences reported in the online mode of learning have resulted in considerable deliberations highlighting the need for pedagogical innovations. Therefore, it is crucial to rethink these ideas and develop pedagogical approaches that accommodate a dynamic understanding of learning spaces and meet the demands of the teaching–learning environment of the contemporary period. This study discusses the various steps through which the task-based autoethnographic pedagogical approach (TAPA) was implemented in an undergraduate-level Critical Food Studies course and proposes it as an effective approach to administering certain courses by enabling active learning in the online mode. The study captures learners' perceptions of meaningful online learning experiences by using an interpretative phenomenological approach, mapping the aspects that contribute to a sense of rekindled interest and involvement in the course. Some of the dominant patterns that emerge from this phenomenological study are (1) appreciation towards praxis-based online learning, (2) recognition of lived space as a ripe site for inquiry and learning, (3) a heightened sense of engagement with lived contexts, and identity discourses, (4) learners' negotiations with TAPA, and (5) learner as an active agent and curator of knowledge. Thus, while situating TAPA as an effective pedagogical approach for online learning and Critical Food Studies curriculum, it is also posited as an approach that initiates negotiation with the epistemic hierarchies within academia.

Keywords Active learning · Critical autoethnography · Critical Food Studies · Learning space · Phenomenology · Online pedagogy

Introduction

The shift to online learning prompted by COVID-19 has significantly changed the teaching–learning experiences across the globe. The disengaging experiences reported in the online mode of learning have highlighted the need for pedagogical innovations (Tulaskar & Turunen, 2021). Most of these deliberations emphasized the need for learner-centric and praxis-based pedagogical designs that promote active learning situations (Schultz & DeMers, 2020). These designs have been an integral part of teaching–learning engagement

since the latter half of the twentieth century when the paradigm shift from teacher-centric pedagogical designs began (Cornelius-White, 2007). Additionally, as online learning emerged as a viable alternative mode of instruction at the beginning of the twenty-first century, learner-centric and praxis-based pedagogical designs that incorporated active learning principles gained popularity because they supported student achievement and motivation, which in turn led to deeper learning (Moreira et al., 2019; Phillips, 2005). Strategic and design guidelines that enabled and enhanced learner participation, personalized feedback, and peer and self-assessment, thereby facilitating learner-centered communities can be identified widely in literature on online learning (Yousef et al., 2014). Most of these existing studies on learner-centric online learning while focus on the design and development of curricula to enhance learner participation by including hands-on, task-based activities (Salmon, 2013; Shah et al., 2022), a consideration for the lack of formal learning space remain largely limited in these designs. As a

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result, the main drawbacks of the current online pedagogical designs can be related to ineffective pedagogical considerations and the use of instructional strategies that resemble the traditional, physical classroom lecture style (Shah et al., 2022; Ubell, 2017).

Learning space has been mostly conceptualized and perceived based on the conventional understanding of built-classroom spaces (Chattaraj & Vijayaraghavan, 2021a; Cox, 2018; Ellis & Goodyear, 2016). Online learning space, on the other hand, is understood as a non-space, a mere stimulation of the real space resulting in learners and facilitators experiencing a sense of disembodiment (Chattaraj & Vijayaraghavan, 2021b; Galik & Tolnaiova, 2020; Pacheco, 2020). To experience effective learning, therefore, the learners are required to make considerable spatial adjustments to overcome this sense of disembodiment (Goodyear, 2020; Zydney et al., 2019). Furthermore, the facilitation of courses that are built on the ethos of learners' learning from their lived contexts, drawing heavily from the experiences of senses, embodiment, and materiality, in such scenarios, becomes challenging and ineffective. Therefore, it is crucial to rethink these ideas and develop pedagogical approaches that can accommodate a dynamic understanding of learning spaces and meet the demands of the teaching–learning environment of the contemporary time.

It is in this context that the present study reports the learning experiences emerging from a pedagogical intervention made at an undergraduate-level humanities course. The study evaluates the implications of administering a task-based autoethnographic pedagogical approach (TAPA) on the experiences of learning the Critical Food Studies course online. In doing so, it adopts an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) to make sense of the phenomenon of effective online learning by documenting the voices and experiences of learners enrolled in this course.

Research questions

The study was conducted to answer the following questions:

1. What is learners' perception of effective online learning and what are the factors that inform their experience of effective learning in the online mode?
2. In what ways can learners be actively engaged in their learning process in the online mode?
3. Can lived spaces be effectively incorporated within the pedagogy through TAPA to provide the learners with an active and embodied experience of online learning?
4. Can TAPA be an effective pedagogical approach for Critical Food Studies and does it provide possibilities to decenter epistemic hierarchies, thereby paving the way for decolonizing the curriculum?

Critical Food Studies

Perceived to be a model of interdisciplinary education, the discipline of Critical Food Studies encourages learners to synthesize among various disciplines and methodologies thereby promoting dialogue, connections, and social solidarity across cultures and epistemologies (Cargill, 2005; Valley et al., 2018). Taught across universities in Northern America, initially courses in Food Studies were mostly taught using a pervasively word-only pedagogy (Deutsch & Miller, 2012). However, aligning with the paradigm shift from Food Studies to Critical Food Studies influenced by disciplines like Cultural Studies, Environmental Studies, and Women's Studies (Koc et al., 2016), there has been a thrust toward experiential learning, participatory pedagogy, and community-engaged research (Deutsch & Miller, 2012; Levkoe et al., 2020). The Critical Food Studies curriculum at the undergraduate and graduate levels, therefore, focuses on the questions of identity (Jones, 2019; Ma Rhea, 2018) and issues related to sustainability (Levkoe et al., 2020; Valley et al., 2018), providing possibilities for learners to engage with the primary focal points of Critical Food Studies like the environment, political economy, society, culture, and human health (Koc et al., 2016).

Furthermore, an experiential and inquiry-oriented pedagogy that familiarizes learners with these areas of inquiry involving the acts of cooking (Brady, 2011; Ehrhardt, 2012), food production, processing, and marketing (Valley et al., 2018), and community engagement practices (Yamashita & Robinson, 2016) can also be located in the literature. Lloro-Bidart and Sidwell (2020) observe that this interdisciplinary field of study has also attracted pedagogues to tap into the possibilities offered by family based and intergenerational learning to develop awareness among the learners regarding their (1) food choices and decision-making practices, (2) cultural and structural practices of dietary acculturation, and (3) ecological sensitivity and sustainability. Such an approach to facilitate the Critical Food Studies curriculum that enables awareness among learners by identifying family and familial space as a site of inquiry and learning is relevant to the pedagogical practices discussed in the study at hand.

The robust nature of the Critical Food Studies curriculum necessitates pedagogical practices that include community engagements, place-based critical learning engagements, and critical reflections on teaching–learning. However, the shift to online learning prompted by COVID-19 posed a unique challenge and possibility for the practitioners and pedagogues of Critical Food Studies. On one hand, the nature of the curriculum demanded an experiential/community engagement that was largely absent in an

online learning context. On the other hand, the materiality of food as an object of inquiry enabled the possibility for learner engagement and proximity in an otherwise distant, online learning set-up (Levkoe et al., 2020). Coupled with the exponential increase in the demand for online courses (Dumford & Miller, 2018), the crisis at hand emerging from the pandemic COVID-19, necessitates the need to innovate pedagogical designs and practices that align with the ethos of the Critical Food Studies curriculum and is sustainable in a context where the formal classroom space of learning and a field-based community engagement is inaccessible.

Task-based autoethnographic pedagogical approach (TAPA)

Task-based autoethnography as a pedagogical approach has evolved considering the ethos of the Critical Food Studies curriculum. Grounded within the principles of active learning (Freeman et al., 2014; Moreira et al., 2019) and aligning with the intersecting goals of critical autoethnography (Holman Jones, 2019), TAPA provides the possibility for the learners to critically engage and curate knowledge on food and its intersections with their own everyday lives. The tasks provide the learners with first-hand exposure and experience to the practices of sourcing, cooking, eating, and reflecting on food production, consumption, and food waste management. Following the educational philosophy of Dewey on learning through experiences (1938), these tasks here become a means by which the learners construct knowledge, skills, and value from direct experiences (Chiu, 2019) through a systematized reflection upon the practice of doing (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). This process of kinesthetic, hands-on/minds-on way of attaining, curating, and creating knowledge, also termed by some educators as “active learning” (Smith et al., 2011), enables learners to actively engage in learning rather than being passive recipients of knowledge (Freeman et al., 2014). The scope to curate knowledge around their (1) food practices and dietary choices, (2) familial and community politics around food, and (3) practices of preservation and food waste management, by critically engaging and reflecting through the lived experience of the self, is an essential tenet of this approach.

TAPA expands the boundaries of experiential learning by integrating critical autoethnography as one of its key attributes. As a method, it enables the learners to document their interactions and negotiations with food and self and in the process study and critique socio-political and cultural practices (Boylorn & Orbe, 2020; Holman Jones, 2018). Already established as a pedagogical practice, critical autoethnography has been reviewed in literature both from the facilitators’ and learners’ perspectives (Armstrong, 2008;

Barr, 2019; Dania, 2021; Pennington, 2007; Roland & Jones, 2020; Sambrook, 2021; Yazan, 2019). The learner-centric paradigm of critical autoethnography that emphasizes the visibility of learners’ voices and responses to pedagogical practices (Cook, 2014; Crawley et al., 2008) is the premise on which TAPA is based. Among various studies, Barr’s (2019) learner-centric approach that integrates active learning with collaborative critical autoethnography to enable intersubjectivity and multivocality through peer interactions is particularly relevant to the design and implementation of TAPA. Following a qualitative mode of inquiry, as is in the case of critical autoethnography, TAPA (1) provides an in-depth and nuanced understanding of human experiences and relationships, (2) focuses on the nature (how), reason (why), and purpose (what) of the lives, (3) throws light on the hegemonic practices about the institutional, political, social, and interpersonal contexts, and (4) enables distinctive perspectives on social phenomenon through an intersectional approach (Collins, 2016). Thus, TAPA provides a possibility for the learners to see their experience “as not purely individual, but connected to and influenced by social structures, forces and issues” (Cook, 2014, p. 271). TAPA, therefore, enables the learners to understand and engage beyond the binary distinctions of the self and the other, the participant and the observer, the present and the past, and the private and the public (Stanley, 1993).

The tasks in the approach empower and challenge learners to develop new ways of understanding the self, the other, and the world. The following intersecting goals of critical autoethnography (Holman Jones, 2019) are taken into account in designing the tasks.

1. Examine the systems, institutions, and discourses that become the source of oppression and privileges (Collins, 2016).
2. Mobilize and develop explanatory frameworks that enable epistemic practices that are dynamic, thus focusing on the heuristic nature of knowledge production (Sedgwick, 2003) thereby dismantling the totalizing claims of Theory with a capital “T.”
3. Channelize new knowledge to stimulate new practices by linking analysis and action to theories, practices, performances, and lived experiences.

These goals are realized in TAPA by foregrounding familial and cultural spaces as a ripe site for learners to engage in the meaning-making process by reflecting on their embodied experiences through feeling, touching, sensing, and moving in cultural spaces (Jones, 2019; Spry, 2016). This embodied experience of learning through TAPA is beneficial, especially in an online learning context, as it promotes active learning and engagement besides offering possibilities for family based, intergenerational learning opportunities that

are essential in facilitating the ethos of the Critical Food Studies curriculum.

Course design: food politics in Global South

The course was conceptualized by taking into account the limited engagement of the Global South in contributing to the epistemic practices of the Critical Food Studies curriculum. Aligning with some of the major trajectories of exploration in Critical Food Studies, the course was thematically organized into four units, i.e., (1) food discourses in the Global South, (2) food and identity politics, (3) food histories and memories, and (4) food, culture, and digitality. During the pandemic time, learners would join online for two synchronous sessions every week with the facilitator for discussions. They spent the two organized asynchronous hours

to plan, execute, and conduct the requirements of TAPA. The tasks in TAPA were designed such that they aligned with the learning objectives of each unit. A concept map that links the units to the tasks in TAPA is provided (Fig. 1).

The simultaneous engagements among the prescribed readings for each unit with the tasks were conceptualized to help the learners contextualize, apply, and critically reflect on their everyday practices. The objective of this endeavor was to facilitate a link between theory and praxis and in the process enables learners to create and curate knowledge on their own foodways and practices. Furthermore, recurrent workshops on doing critical autoethnography were conducted so that the learners could document and critically reflect on the lived experiences of the tasks provided.

The tasks were self-directed in the sense that learners could choose their ingredients based on a careful reflection of their significance in their everyday lives. However,

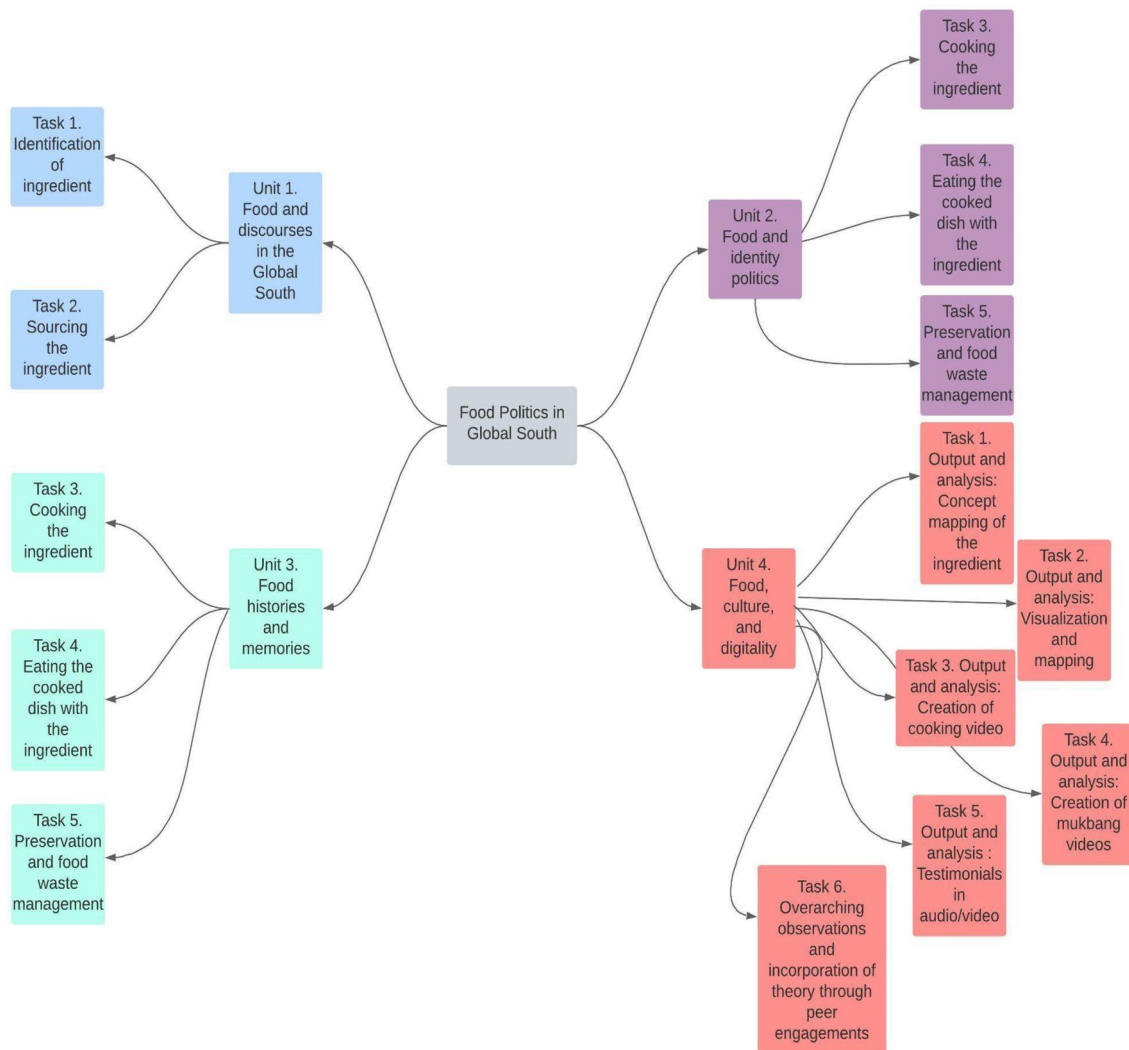


Fig. 1 Mapping of the units with the tasks in task-based autoethnographic pedagogical approach (TAPA)

to assist them in their process of analysis, critical autoethnographic reflections, and peer-group discussions, a list of indicative pointers is provided for each task. A representative sample of the same is provided in Online Appendix III. Also, a stepwise representation of all the tasks, detailing its various focal points, is provided in the Fig. 2.

These tasks were followed by class discussions, cooperative learning, peer-group reflections, and other such

activities that form the core of the active learning process (Felder & Brent, 1996; Moreira et al., 2019). The peer groups were self-initiated and formulated by learners based on the nature of the ingredient. For instance, four learners from diverse geographical regions like Southern India, Western Indian, and Northern India came together to work on the region-specific variant of chilies.

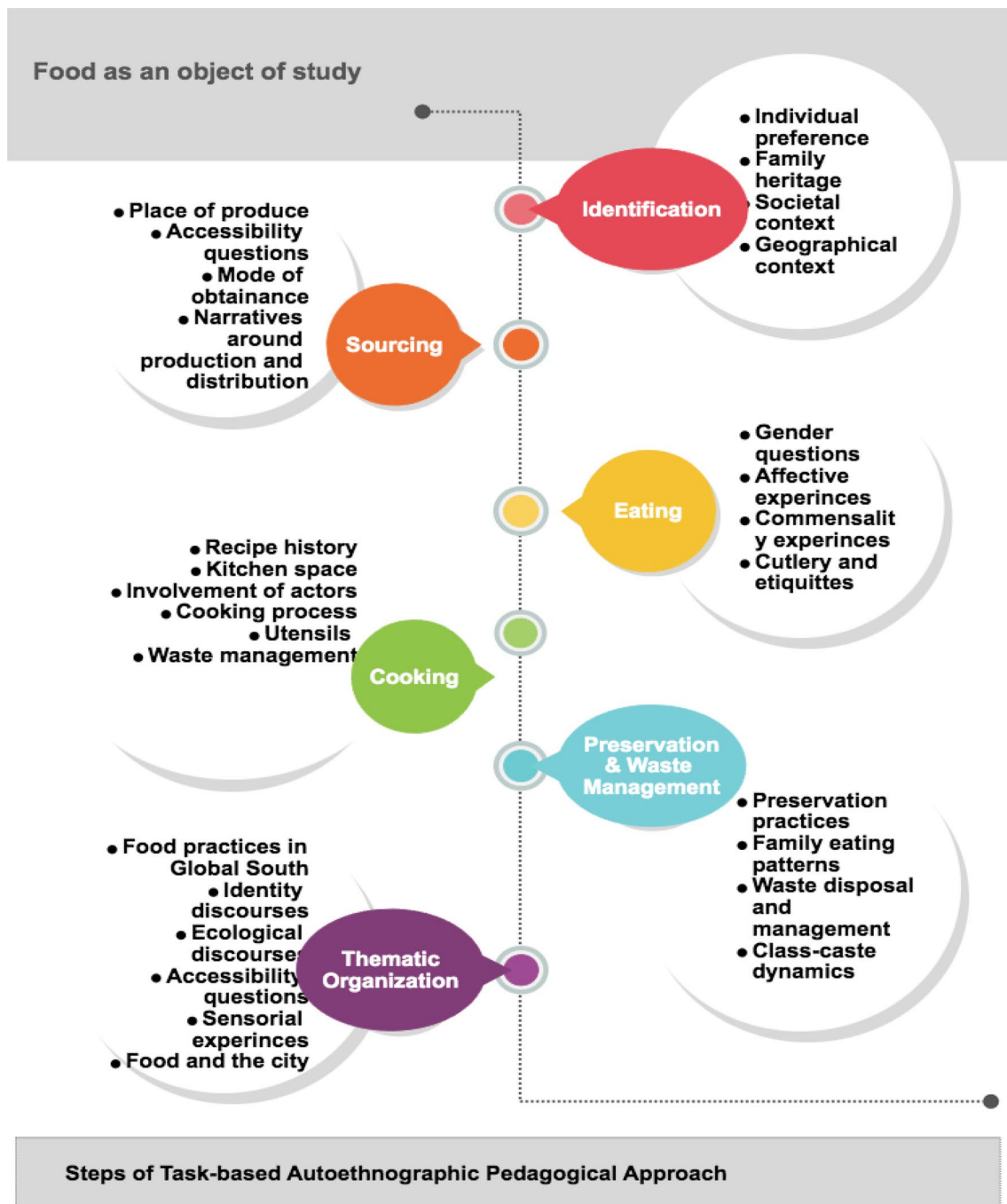


Fig. 2 Tasks in task-based autoethnographic pedagogical approach (TAPA) for Critical Food Studies course

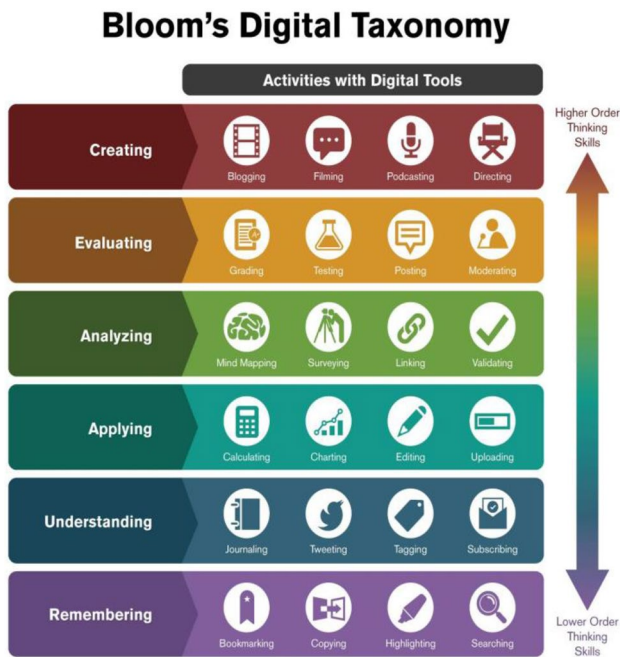


Fig. 3 Bloom's Digital Taxonomy from Arizona State University Website. (Color figure online)

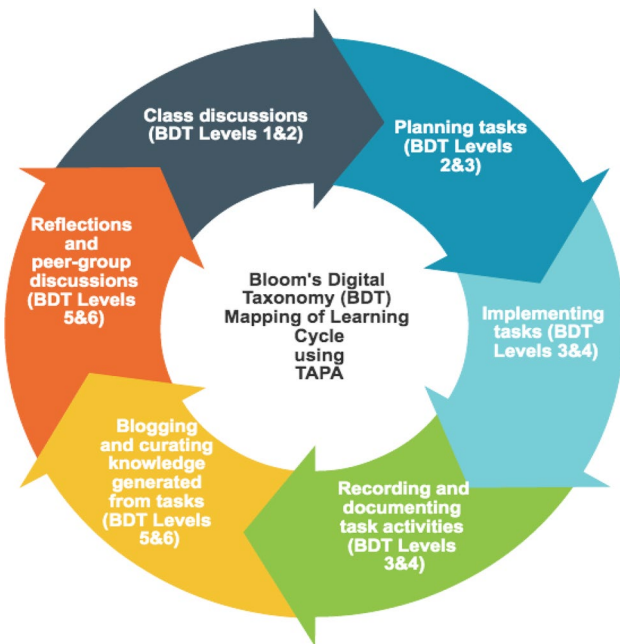


Fig. 4 Bloom's Digital Taxonomy mapping of the learning cycle using task-based autoethnographic pedagogical approach (TAPA)

A visual representation of the synchronous and asynchronous learning activities along with their corresponding mapping with Bloom's Digital Taxonomy (Sneed, 2016) is provided (Figs. 3, 4).

The task outputs were continuously remarked, assessed, and evaluated by the facilitator and they acted as a feedback mechanism and also contributed to the continuous internal assessment requirements for the course. Overall, the course had three internal assessments in the form of submission of autoethnographic reflective reports, blog posts, reports on peer-group discussions, an open-book examination, and one summative final examination.

Methodology

Interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA)

The study adopts the interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) to interpret and make sense of learners' perceptions of the phenomenon of online learning using TAPA. Rooted in the phenomenological tradition informed by the works of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012), IPA offers opportunities for the facilitator-researchers to make sense of learner-participants' accounts of their lived experiences, meanings, and perceptions of learning the Critical Food Studies course online through TAPA. Merleau-Ponty's (1962) observation on how the human body's relationship with the lived space is essential in informing any experience is particularly relevant to the study to understand how the embodied experience of learning shapes the effectiveness of TAPA in an online context. Developed as a distinctive approach for conducting qualitative research, IPA follows a double hermeneutic process (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). The process of IPA involves hermeneutics rooted in the understanding that humans can make sense of their own experiences and therefore their accounts reflect their attempts to make sense of these experiences (Smith & Shinebourne, 2012). In the present study, therefore, the learner-participants interpret their experience of learning online through TAPA in a manner that makes sense to them, and, in doing so, they attempt to convey their perceptions of these experiences in a way that is understandable to the facilitator-researchers. Furthermore, by employing the same sense-making process and capacities as the learner-participants, the facilitator-researchers consciously and systematically analyze the learner-participants' accounts to identify and unravel dominant themes (Smith et al., 2021).

Given the nature of the study, the questions used for the semi-structured interviews were formulated, reviewed, and revised exhaustively and were intentionally left open-ended and non-directive to evoke meaningful responses. Online Appendix I provides the list of questions used for this study.

Recruitment

After the ethical clearance of the study was received from the host university, the research investigators individually reached out to the students enrolled in the course *Food Politics in the Global South* to seek their participation. The participation was voluntary in nature and no incentives were provided to the students. The study successfully recruited 50% of the students, i.e., nine out of 18 who were enrolled in the course for the 2021 Fall semester, thereby enabling an adequate representation of learners' voices. These students were enrolled in final year undergraduate programs and had attended 1 year of offline classes before the university shifted to a remote learning mode in March 2020. By the time they enrolled for this course, they already had experienced learning online full-time for a period of more than two academic semesters. These students comprised an interesting set as they had the experience of obtaining higher education in the same university in both online and offline modes and had also completed MOOC courses from various international universities. Given the dynamic nature of their learning experience, their contributions toward evaluating the success of an online course becomes unique, relevant, and pertinent.

Participants

All nine participants in the study were enrolled in the triple major English, History, and Political Science program at the host university. Given that phenomenological studies generally consider four to 10 participants as optimum, the sample size for the present study can be considered to be ideal (Mastel-Smith & Stanley-Hermanns, 2012). Furthermore, by the eighth interview, adequate insights into the lived experiences of a fairly homogeneous group were gathered. They are homogeneous in the sense that all of them (1) had previous experiences of learning in classroom spaces, (2) had transitioned to online learning during the pandemic time, and also (3) were able to continue learning, especially in the Global South context, where access to education was a challenge for most of the learners owing to the digital divide. The investigators also felt that the experiences reported were getting repeated and hence decided to conduct one more interview before closing the interviews and thoroughly examining each individual case on the tenets of IPA methodology (Garip et al., 2020). The demographic characteristics of the participants are provided in Online Appendix II. Information about the level of study, age, gender, and religious affiliations is provided. To maintain the clause of anonymity and protect the participant's identities, names are replaced with pseudonyms during the process of transcription by the second author.

Data collection

Pre-interview questionnaires consisting of questions on the learners' demographics, as well as the informed consent clause were emailed to the participants. After obtaining the responses, time slots for the interviews were decided based on the mutual convenience of the participants and the investigators. The interviews were conducted and recorded using Google Meet Platform in November and December 2021. Both investigators were present while conducting the interviews to reduce interviewer bias. The average length of the interviews was 30:12 min. The interviews were transcribed verbatim before being explicated for the study.

Data analysis

The data elicited for the study were analyzed in the model proposed by Colaizzi (Tuffour, 2017). (1) Multiple readings and annotations of the transcripts were made followed by (2) investigator's discussions, (3) derivation of main themes, a cluster of themes, and sub-themes, (4) establishment of interrelationships between the dominant themes, and (5) evaluations of the fundamentals of the phenomenon which in this context was online learning through TAPA. The principles of sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance were adhered to throughout the study process to achieve "trustworthiness" (Garip et al., 2020). Rodham et al. (2015) observe that the traditional positivist terms such as "reliability" and "validity" are contested and replaced by the term "trustworthiness" as it is more appropriate to the philosophical traditions of phenomenology. The strategy of Comprehensive Triangulation by Denzin was adopted for the study (Flick, 2018) which ensured the three types of data triangulation i.e. investigator, theoretical, and methodological triangulation.

Result and analysis

IPA, as a mode of inquiry, is invested in how the person-in-context experiences and understands the phenomenon, rather than exploring the nature of the phenomenon in itself. Therefore, an understanding of the phenomenon, according to Heidegger, is made possible through access to the "lifeworld" of the person-in-context (Larkin et al., 2006). According to Merleau-Ponty (1962), the structures of personal experiences spread and made sense across time and space reveal the understanding of the phenomena and could be communicated through appropriate expressions. In this sense, the accounts of learner-participants reveal that the phenomena of learning Critical Food Studies course online through TAPA is informed by a sense of active involvement

and increased awareness of the politics associated with food in their lived contexts and identities. Some of the dominant patterns that emerge and shape the phenomena of online learning in this context are (1) appreciation towards praxis-based online learning, (2) recognition of lived space as a ripe site for inquiry and learning, (3) a heightened sense of engagement with lived contexts and identity discourses, (4) learners' negotiations with TAPA, and (5) learner as an active agent and curator of knowledge.

Appreciation towards praxis-based online learning

Most of the participants observed that their experience of learning the present course is distinct from the earlier courses they have learned both in the offline and online modes. Similar to the popular perception, the experience of learning online, in general, is described by the participants as “difficult”, “demotivating”, and “unfulfilling.”

Adjusting to the online mode, was quite difficult in the beginning. When the reading materials were given I didn't really have any motivation to do it because I kept on procrastinating... I didn't have any motivation or determination to complete assignments because it was online. I was quite distracted. (Riya)

Most of the online classes tend to be redundant. So it's like a cycle, you wake up, you switch on your laptop, and then your classes. However, this subject actually helped me, you know, to take a break from that. Get hands-on experience doing something very different from the rest of the subjects. (Nupur)

The accounts reflect a change in perception towards online learning of the course informed by the tasks administered through TAPA. The learners were appreciative of the first-hand exposure to the lived realities of food practices and the hands-on experiences of sourcing, cooking, and other associated practices. The tasks were identified by the learners as the means through which they were able to actively engage with the concepts introduced in the course and further locate and apply the theoretical frameworks to their everyday experiences and cultural contexts as articulated in the accounts.

I feel a few courses, especially Food Politics, involved us in a lot of cooking and there was a lot of hands-on experience that we had to do. And so I think, with papers like that, my understanding of whatever we were learning was better. (Adivi)

Food politics was the most interesting one. That was because it was neither too theoretical nor too application-based. It was a mixture of both, and I really enjoyed it. If it was too theoretical, like only the concepts in the larger social-political ideas, it might be a bit dry, but when the application was based on some-

thing, which was intrinsic to my culture, or like everyone's culture, it became more engaging. It was really fun. (Nida)

The phenomenon of online learning in the context of the present course is informed by a heightened sense of relatability and engagement owing to the practice of doing. Therefore, an engaging learning experience in the online mode evidently emerges from the paradigm of praxis-based pedagogies that promote active learning principles.

Lived space as a ripe site for inquiry and learning

The sense of relatability that the learners associate with the course emerges from the possibility to locate their lived contexts and spaces as a ripe site for observation, inquiry, engagement, and learning. Some of the accounts that reflect the embodied learning experiences are documented below.

Online was really fun because we could see the instances of what we were being taught at home. Talking about commensality, or having ethnic biases, cultural biases within our families, and how COVID-19 was impacting all of us and waste management. So, we could see that in real-time. (Akshaya)

It was really fun. We got to know a lot of things and also engage with the socio-political context. For me, it was already there, but we were blinded. But once we started learning all these concepts and all, we started analyzing each and everything that we started doing, like even the kitchen practices, or dining hall practices... (Nida)

I think if we actually properly make use of our home spaces, it can be a really good area for understanding and getting prior knowledge. I think we tend to think that going outside to institutes will be very helpful for getting knowledge. But I think home space also can provide that same arena if we actually put in the effort. (Riya)

Here, the perception of learning is centred around the possibilities offered by family based, and intergenerational learning wherein the learners initiate discussions and negotiations on food practices with familial members, community members, and their own self. Along with the appreciation to relate theory to everyday lived experiences, in this context, TAPA enables the learners to extend the perception of learning space from formal to familial spaces as observed in the accounts below.

My home space provided me with an amazing opportunity to indulge with this ingredient quite frequently since I'm not from here (Bangalore). If I would have done it totally offline, I would have to set-up calls with my parents to ask questions. And I would not have

been involved as much as I've been involved this way. As it was online mode, everything was at my disposal. I could just go to the other bedroom and ask my parents if I had a doubt, it was quite helpful for me. (Riya) I feel one of my favorites will be the one where we had to make a video of the food using the ingredient that we chose. That was an extremely fun experience because I always found cooking to be tiresome and very chaotic especially because I live in a joint family. This time, it was fun because all of us came together, and we helped each other out. My family members, like my uncles, pitched in and my grandmother also came. It felt like a really wholesome experience. (Nupur)

Here it is important to note that though a sense of meaningful engagement in online learning is enabled through TAPA by locating it within the familial and lived spaces, some of the learners also reflected the challenges emerging out of the diverse living situations, contexts, and their nature, as is observed in the accounts.

Food Politics requires taking a particular ingredient and researching about it, visiting places. So in my case, sometimes it was not possible. (Manoj)

It was difficult in the sense that we were asked to actually go to the place and talk to people, shopkeepers, grocery owners and all. First of all, when I heard it, it was a little difficult, but later it was okay for me, I actually talked to them. (Durga)

So basically, I was in Bangalore and it was quite tough to do this task, but I really enjoyed doing it online... From my past experiences of cooking and seeing my mom cooking on a daily basis at home. Since one activity was to create a video and an autoethnographic report on cooking ... I called my sister and she planned everything. So I video-called my mother and she told me - the recipe and ingredients and how to go about it. As mentioned in my report, I virtually cooked *Chilika* (gram-flour pancakes)... This scenario like video calling (cooking) was new to me because I had never done that before. The experience of virtually cooking was new to me. (Shivam)

The learning situations, contexts, and the nature of learners, therefore, play an integral role in shaping the experiences of learning through TAPA. While for some learners, a gradual change and openness towards the requirements of the tasks are noticeable, few others identified the limitations of their own situations and initiated strategies to mitigate the same. Some of the learner-initiated strategies include (1) a critical engagement with the memories of culinary practices at home space, and (2) an integration of technology to enhance the effectiveness of the task and thereby learning experiences.

Such stimulations of new strategies and practices where the learners linked their analysis and activities in the tasks to frameworks of food memories and virtual commensalities introduced as a part of the Critical Food Studies course to better their learning experiences are indicative of how TAPA empowers and challenges the learners to develop new ways of understanding the self, the other, and the world.

Heightened sense of engagement with lived contexts and identity discourses

The accounts reveal that the embodied experience of learning within the lived context enables the learners to critically engage with the power structures operating within their immediate spaces of engagement. Some of the accounts that highlight this observation are provided below.

I realized that both cooked food and raw ingredients have notions of purity and impurity associated with them. For example, raw coconut is understood to be purer with respect to different castes or religions. We are from a Brahmin family, raw coconut is purer for us compared to some households belonging to other castes. On the other hand, a dish cooked with coconut is understood to be purer when cooked by a non-menstruating person. So you see, it's very different and it keeps changing. (Nupur)

Initially, we used to see coconut as just an ingredient and now when we think about it we think about gender aspects, and religious aspects. I'm bringing the theories I am reading and finding parallels between the articles and our ingredients. (Durga)

The larger sense of awareness about structural inequalities operating within intimate spaces like "home" is also coupled with a sense of realization of their lack of "attention" and "notice" to the power politics associated with the identities before the commencement of the course. The learners were particularly appreciative of the ingredient-based autoethnographic approach that enabled them to realize the operational politics associated with gender, caste, class, religion, and other identities within their everyday lives as observed in the accounts below.

I've taken a new interest in food and the representation of food through different mediums. I couldn't attend the class on that day when we discussed the movie *The Great Indian kitchen*. I remember I was so upset because I really wanted to talk about it. Because it made me realize that my mom, had to get up at five in the morning, cook, go to work, come back, go to the kitchen, cook, and come back. I knew that was happening. But I never really questioned why it was happening, or that I didn't really

pay attention to it. I started paying more attention to food like I already said Appadurai (theorist) really had a very significant impact on me. (Aditi)

We had to record and curate everything to the proper process. And then the larger social-political engagement was done. The cleaning activity, my father was never allowed to do because, he can't, because he is a man! A lot of it was already there. But I never noticed; I only knew that mom or I would clean it. That was always there, and then I started engaging... (Nida)

Before taking this course, I thought food to be just a general thing that we consume daily, I never thought we can look at it from this (identity discourses) perspective. (Manoj)

Most of the learners were also able to translate this awareness to the larger context of society and community. Alongside the critical reflections, the accounts also reveal significant insights into the learners' attempt to constantly negotiate their identity positions as observed in the accounts.

I'm from a family which is unfortunately very patriarchal in nature. Also very religious, and follow certain traditions and cultures that our ancestors have followed very rigorously. And so we go to *madams* (Hindu religious places) and we eat the food on banana leaves there... I started observing so many things like what food represents in my cultural group, the relationships between the people, especially men and women in this social group. The fact that women don't eat before men and the fact that after men eat, women actually have to clean and throw their banana leaves with their own hands. It's not like, you know, they just get someone else to do it. They have to do it themselves. And it's always the wife of the man who has to do that. So, I think I've started paying attention to more of that. And I've also started openly disagreeing. (Aditi)

Yeah, I think this helped me to realize my privilege because I'm from a family of vegetarians. So it was easy for me to dismiss other practices saying that these are harmful to the environment, but food has cultural and memory ties and you cannot just discount them. While discussing wet markets, a lot of us in the class especially in the context of COVID-19 associated it as places where we get wild meat, and where contamination starts. But when we talked about it and explored the wet market near my house, it was very different from what I had imagined. There were a lot of fresh products, and they were fresh greens, and they were very cheaper in comparison to the supermarkets that basically sell them at a higher price. So a lot about my biases and privilege was revealed. (Akshaya)

The attempt to negotiate with their own identity positions in certain cases, while informed by the realization of their privileges, in certain others it is shaped by a feeling of oppression and subsequent attempt to resist and question the normative practices. The reflections from the learners suggest that the embodied experience of learning within their lived context provides possibilities not only to (1) engage with food as a point of inquiry to understand the power politics operating within their own everyday lives, but also to (2) perceive learning as a means to make sense of their "self" and the world around them through active engagement and curation of knowledge. TAPA, through an intersection of lived contexts with identity discourses, enables learners to see their experiences not just as individual but informed by social structures and institutions. Thus TAPA, by providing avenues to learn from familial spaces and intergenerational sources, becomes an effective pedagogical approach that aligns with the ethos of the Critical Food Studies curriculum.

Learners' negotiations with TAPA

Learners also display awareness that TAPA involves learning through the process of doing, researching, and critical self-reflection. While they termed their previous research and learning experiences as passive, the present experience was appraised to be "effective", "engaging", "fruitful", and "enabling", as displayed below.

When you're doing like, passive research, you are just reviewing all those articles or scholarly books, but once we are doing the autoethnographic account, we are actually getting to experience the sensorial thing, which you get when you're doing autoethnography. Food always appeals to our senses first, to properly understand that I think the autoethnographic approach is the better option. (Nida)

Autoethnography allowed us to understand the particular selected ingredient more because we involved ourselves to create a narrative than relying on just secondary narratives. And since it was like my local practices, there were hardly any articles or journals published on this food item. Autoethnography was the best methodology that could have been given to us to engage with this. It takes into account our own voices. Considering this, autoethnography turned out to be very fruitful in that sense. (Riya)

Critical autoethnography, the key attribute of TAPA, is employed by the learners to document and negotiate their interactions with food and self-enable them to reflect on their embodied experiences of feeling, touching, and sensing to make sense of their lifeworld and curate narratives on them. While the learners were highly appreciative of the

learning experiences offered by TAPA, they also noted certain limitations.

My group members were not that cooperative. They have their own challenges. So we did not actually meet and I feel meeting virtually is not that good but then they did their work. I had conversations with other classmates even though we had different ingredients but even then we were able to discuss different narratives based on our culture and also find similarities. (Merin)

Yeah, I think one of the biggest challenges is that you only have you, and a lot of time. There can be an unintentional bias. That is because you're observing your own cultural practices for a really long time. I think individual tasks were easier because I just had my schedule to manage. And it's always easy to talk about your own self and ideas, without adjusting to other's perspectives. But again, in the peer thing, I had local food practices. Though the ingredients were the same, they had local ideas associated with it. So, it was eye-opening to understand how these local practices are different for different regions across India. (Akshaya)

As noted in the accounts, the limitations of TAPA include (1) the challenges in discussion with peers in the virtual mode, (2) a preference for individual tasks as opposed to group tasks, and (3) unintentional biases emerging from a longer self-engagement with one's own lived context and practices. Also, it is interesting to note that though there is inertia towards peer engagements, the learners' showcased an awareness of the relevance of multivocality and intersubjectivity that the TAPA peer interaction component of TAPA promoted. Despite the challenges experienced, the learners seem to showcase a heightened awareness of their own learning process.

Learner as an active agent and curator of knowledge

The accounts reveal a general sense of appreciation towards the significance of the learners' role in building and curating knowledge through TAPA. While reflecting on the embodied experience of learning as an enabling process that enhances their critical thinking and reflection abilities, they were particularly appreciative of the 'sense of value' that they experienced in putting forward their opinions and voices.

It forces you to place yourself within your society. So you're given the freedom to express what you feel about it. There is no right or wrong. But it's about how you perceive yourself as a part of society. So I think it's actually liberating in a manner because it asks you what you feel and to document your personal journey in your society, in your cul-

tural group. It's helpful because it makes you ask a lot of "why" questions instead of just "what", but you kind of reflect on the things that you have already seen around you and never really paid attention to. So I think it's a great approach because it forces you to think and give your opinion, you're not just stating facts. Also, you don't take a very hypocritical approach because - I realized when I was writing my blog that I'm not really allowed to disassociate myself from what I'm a part of, or my position in society and just criticize the practices. So I think it forces you to reflect on the society, but most importantly, your role in the society. (Aditi)

This course actually provided such a great and broad platform for me to express my opinions. I feel a lot of pending emotions regarding the community that I'm a part of in a more critical and analytical way and it has contributed to my knowledge immensely, and ... especially with the autoethnographic approach... It is very liberating... (Nupur)

The sense of liberation and the fruitfulness associated with the learning process here emerges from the attempt to make sense of their "self" through their encounters with culinary and societal experiences. This sense is further enhanced by learners' realization of the possibility to situate themselves beyond the role of passive recipient of "factual" information and knowledge. Consequently, a change in perception of their own role as active agents and contributors to the construction and curation of knowledge can be observed in the accounts below.

Usually, Google tasks are not practical tasks And I think the tasks in this course were not tasks that we could have found online and more than that these were not tasks that we wanted to it be found online, because these are fun enough to do and interesting enough to involve yourself and other people in it. (Akshaya)

Autoethnography actually allowed us to get an understanding of the particular selected ingredient more because we involved ourselves to create a narrative, and we did not have to rely on other narratives to create our own. We didn't rely on any secondary narratives. And since it was like my local practices, there were hardly any articles or journals that have been published on this food item. So I got totally involved. (Riya)

The change in the perception of the role of the learner can also be reflected in the initiatives taken by the learners to translate the learning acquired to (1) reach a wider audience in the form of online content creation, (2) locate avenues that would benefit from the application of autoethnography as a method, and (3) initiate community engagements to improve the living situations and conditions.

We followed up through the tasks towards the end and made our engagement more intense. We could analyze a lot of aspects and actually put a lot of thinking into it... We actually went all out to make a website and even made a YouTube channel for posting all the cooking videos. (Anjala)

This course was not restrictive. I was able to share my opinions freely. So I think it is a very good course. Even this autoethnographic study needs to be carried on to study many marginal communities' way of eating food and also their culture of consuming emotional foods. I think this will bring out a new insights to everyone and I think it needs to be carried on. (Merin)

In my area whenever we dispose of our waste, it is in a small dustbin, which is kept outside the kitchen. After one day we used to throw it in the nearby open ground, which is quite problematic, which I have mentioned in my report, that whenever, the next time I visit, given the chance, I'll change the scenario, after talking to the municipality or corporation. (Shivam)

TAPA, thus, as a pedagogical approach not only empowers and challenges the learners by providing a space to voice their opinions and curate knowledge around their familial, community, and local practices, but also becomes a means to mobilize and promote the heuristic nature of knowledge production that enables the de-centering of Theory. TAPA, therefore, enables decolonization of the "ways of knowing" and "ways of engaging" by foregrounding the voices and experiences from the Global South that stimulates new frames to engage with the discipline of Critical Food Studies.

Discussion

The phenomenological investments into the "lifeworld" of the participant-learners reveal that TAPA significantly informs the learners' perception of the Critical Food Studies curriculum and experience of learning in an online mode. Making sense of their "self", "others", and the world around them by the "practice of doing" (Dewey & Authentic, 1938; Kolb & Kolb, 2017) tasks associated with sourcing, cooking, and other practices related to food, here, plays a central role in evoking critical awareness surrounding food and their intersections with their everyday lives. Through such first-hand exposure to food practices, TAPA is able to promote a sense of ownership and empowerment among the learners by transitioning their role to active curators and creators, rather than mere passive recipients of knowledge (Freeman et al., 2014). Such an experience of learning through a systemized involvement and reflection that realizes the principles of active learning (Felder & Brent, 1996; Freeman et al.,

2014; Moreira et al., 2019) seems to be an essential necessity for the effective administration of any courses in the online mode. Further, the scope of TAPA to locate the learners within their familial and cultural spaces through specific tasks and reflections through critical autoethnographic documentation facilitates an embodied learning experience of learning which is otherwise mostly absent in an online learning scenario.

This process of engaging in the meaning-making process through an embodied experience of feeling, touching, and sensing food ingredient and moving across cultural spaces (Jones, 2019; Spry, 2016), changes the perception of a learning space among the learners and extends its boundaries to lived spaces in which they critically engage through their tasks. This invariably allows the learners to regard family and community members as essential sources and actors in their learning process thereby indicating the relevance of family based and intergenerational learning (Lloro-Bidart & Sidwell, 2020). A visualization of effective online learning engagement through TAPA is provided in the Fig. 5.

The possibility to study and critique familial, socio-political, and cultural practices through learners' interactions and negotiations with food practices make TAPA an appropriate pedagogical approach to introduce and impart the ethos and ethics of a Critical Food Studies curriculum. TAPA as an approach is able to bring together experiential learning, participatory pedagogy, and family and community-based interactions, engagements, and research and in the process, draw the attention of the learners to the nuances related to food and identity, ecological sensitivity, sustainability, and the politics of consumption and its intersection with various social structures, which are essential focal points of a Critical Food Studies curriculum (Deutsch & Miller, 2012; Jones, 2019; Koc et al., 2016; Levkoe et al., 2020; Ma Rhea, 2018; Valley et al., 2018). The tasks related to everyday food practices along with critical autoethnographic reflections and documentation in TAPA enable the learners to locate food as a point of inquiry to (1) critically engage with hegemonic discourses in their everyday lives, (2) locate their privileges, and (3) curate knowledge around their own culture (Boylorn & Orbe, 2020; Collins, 2016; Holman Jones, 2018; Jones, 2019). The learners' critique of the normative practices surrounding food, and in the process, their realization of oppression and privileges both at the individual and social levels, further highlights the mode in which TAPA enables the facilitation of the objectives of a Critical Food Studies curriculum.

One of the strengths of TAPA as a pedagogical approach is that it is able to translate the concepts, theories, and frameworks introduced as a part of the Critical Food Studies curriculum to stimulate practices, and new ways of thinking and knowing among the learners, based on their own lived experiences with food practices. As a result, the synchronous class

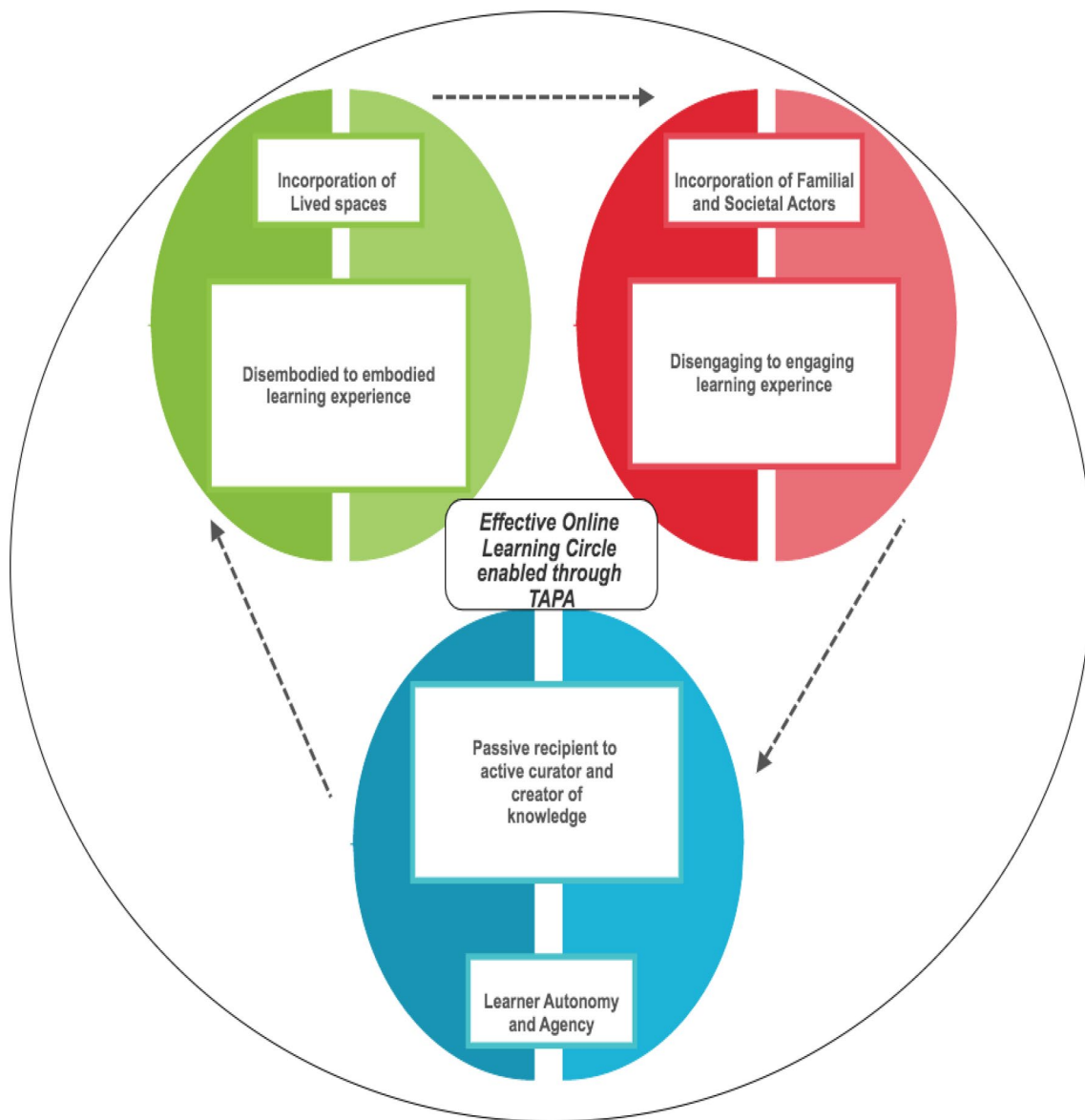


Fig. 5 Effective online learning circle enabled through task-based autoethnographic pedagogical approach (TAPA)

discussions become a premise to engage with existing frames and theories in the Critical Food Studies curriculum and simultaneously reflect and vocalize the applicability of these knowledge systems to their own lived realities and contexts. TAPA, therefore, by facilitating knowledge curation and creation, initiates the de-centering of epistemic hierarchies associated with theoretical texts, facilitators, as well as the Food Studies curriculum. Furthermore, this also enables learners to channelize the knowledge acquired to stimulate practices and social actions beneficial to respective communities. Through the visibility of food practices and politics in local spaces by engaging in the curation and creation of knowledge systems, TAPA provides a space for the representation of voices and concerns from the perspective of the Global South. TAPA by

highlighting the knowledge gaps and the distinctness of local food practices and politics problematizes Global North-centric engagement in the Critical Food Studies curriculum. Thereby, the pedagogical practice stimulates new ways of “thinking” and “knowing”, and in the process, initiates the possibility of decolonizing a curriculum that evolved primarily from the context of the Global North.

Conclusion

The learners’ accounts documented in this phenomenological study become the means to understand the factors that lead to a meaningful active learning experience through

the administration of TAPA. By discussing the various steps through which TAPA was implemented in the Critical Food Studies course, the study proposes an approach that can be used to administer courses in the online mode. Further, through the contextualization of learning within the lived spaces and experiences, the work highlights the modes through which an embodied learning experience can be enabled even in the absence of the built-classroom space.

Despite the essential contribution of the study to the domain of online pedagogy and the facilitation of the Critical Food Studies curriculum, it includes certain limitations that provide possibilities to prompt further research engagements in the field. The challenges noted by the learners in practicing collaborative learning is an area that requires an in-depth intervention. Some of the ways in which the challenges of collaborative learning can be mitigated are through prompting the learners to voluntarily record their online meetings and interactions. Even though TAPA was successful in overcoming the sense of disengagement with learning by spatially contextualizing it, the experiences of lived spaces are diverse, and therefore it might diversely impact the experiences of learning. Besides, the learner-initiated strategies to overcome these challenges, discussed in the patterns above, provide insights into the possibility of this approach to empower learners, promote self-directed learning, and enable them to handle diverse hindrances in the online mode.

Here it is important to note that this approach was designed, primarily, taking into consideration certain Social Science and Humanities courses. Therefore, there needs to be further engagements to extend the applicability of this approach to other disciplines. However, this approach is highly suitable for disciplines like Material Cultural Studies, Memory Studies, Anthropology, Museum Studies, Urban Studies, Environmental and Ecological Studies, and other allied disciplines that allow the possibility to locate material objects as a point of inquiry. More importantly, the approach opens up new inroads to negotiate with the epistemic hierarchies within academia by decentralizing teacher-centric, theory-centric, and Global North-centric epistemic practices.

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Data availability All the transcripts of this qualitative, phenomenological study can be made available on request.

Declarations

Conflict of interest There is no conflict of interest for the study.

Ethical approval The work has been exempted from review by the host university's ethics committee (Research Conduct and Ethics Committee) and a certificate for the same can be made available.

Consent for publication Not required.

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