

Integrating Cultural Heritage through Case-Based Pedagogy in Foreign Language Education in Uzbekistan: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: Integrating learners' cultural heritage into foreign language education raises an important pedagogical question: how can culturally meaningful knowledge be transformed into activities that require purposeful target-language use? Case-based pedagogy offers one potential approach by organizing learning around situations, problems, dilemmas, and interpretive tasks that require learners to mobilize language in context. This systematic review examines the intersection of case-based pedagogy, Uzbek cultural heritage, and foreign language education in Uzbekistan. Following PRISMA 2020, international bibliographic databases and relevant regional scholarly sources were searched for empirical studies addressing foreign language teaching or learning, pedagogical case use, and identifiable Uzbek cultural heritage or local cultural knowledge in the Uzbekistani context. Studies were examined in relation to cultural representation, case design, language-mediated learner activity, reported learning outcomes, and construct-measure alignment. The synthesis identified two related but largely parallel strands of research. One addresses case-based foreign language pedagogy in Uzbekistan without clearly establishing the integration of identifiable Uzbek heritage, whereas the other incorporates Uzbek cultural resources into foreign language education without clearly establishing pedagogical case use. The available evidence therefore does not establish a sufficiently developed empirical literature in which both components are systematically integrated and evaluated within the same instructional design. Rather than demonstrating established effectiveness, the review identifies an integration gap between case-based pedagogy and heritage-responsive foreign language education. To address this gap, the review proposes pedagogical alignment coherence among cultural representation, case architecture, language-mediated learner activity, intended learning outcomes, and assessment evidence as an analytical framework for future research. Future studies should explicitly transform Uzbek cultural heritage into case-based language-learning tasks and evaluate linguistic, cultural, intercultural, cognitive, affective, and identity-related outcomes using construct-appropriate measures.

Keywords: case-based learning; cultural heritage; foreign language education; intercultural competence; culturally responsive pedagogy; Uzbekistan.

1. Introduction

Foreign language education involves more than the acquisition of linguistic forms; it also entails engagement with culturally situated meanings, perspectives, and practices. Intercultural approaches therefore challenge a strict separation between language and culture in language education (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Culturally responsive and sustaining perspectives extend this argument by treating learners' existing cultural knowledge and experiences as educational resources rather than positioning culture exclusively as knowledge associated with the target language (Gay, 2018; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). This raises a central pedagogical question: how can learners' own cultural heritage become a resource for meaningful target-language learning rather than merely additional cultural content?. This question is particularly relevant in Uzbekistan, where foreign language education can potentially draw on folklore, traditions, social practices, historical and material heritage, cultural realia, literature, and other forms of local cultural knowledge. Such resources may provide opportunities for learners to explain, interpret, compare, and communicate culturally meaningful knowledge through another language. However, the inclusion of a tradition, monument, folktale, cultural object, or other heritage resource in a lesson does not by itself constitute culturally grounded pedagogy. Its pedagogical significance depends on how cultural material is represented and transformed into purposeful language-mediated activity.

Case-based pedagogy offers one possible mechanism for such transformation. In this review, case-based pedagogy refers to instruction in which learners engage with a bounded situation, narrative, problem, dilemma, incident, or decision context that requires analysis and a substantive response. This definition distinguishes pedagogical cases from case-study research methodology, in which a bounded case is investigated as an object of research. The distinction is particularly important because terms such as *case study*, *case method*, and *case technology* may denote different practices across educational and research literature. When heritage is embedded within a pedagogical case, learners may use the target language to interpret cultural meanings, compare perspectives, negotiate explanations, address situated problems, justify decisions, or communicate culturally situated knowledge. The relevant pedagogical issue is therefore not the presence of a case format or cultural content alone, but the alignment among cultural representation, case design, language-mediated learner activity, intended learning outcomes, and assessment. A culturally relevant topic does not automatically constitute case-based learning, just as the use of a pedagogical case does not automatically make instruction culturally responsive.

This distinction is equally important when interpreting learning outcomes. Linguistic or communicative development, cultural knowledge, intercultural competence, cognition, affect, and identity are related but analytically distinct constructs. Cultural knowledge should not automatically be interpreted as intercultural competence, participation as evidence of improved language proficiency, or positive responses to heritage content as evidence of identity development. Intercultural communicative competence extends beyond factual cultural knowledge to capacities involving interpretation, interaction, attitudes, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). Similarly, identity in language learning concerns learners' positioning and their relationships with language, participation, and social experience (Kramsch, 2009; Norton, 2013). A rigorous synthesis must therefore examine not only the outcomes claimed in primary studies but also whether the measures used provide appropriate evidence for those claims. Despite the

potential connections among these areas, the relevant literature in Uzbekistan appears conceptually fragmented. Research may address case-based foreign language instruction without specifying identifiable Uzbek heritage, whereas other studies may incorporate Uzbek cultural resources without establishing pedagogical case use. Research on intercultural or sociocultural competence may likewise address culture broadly without demonstrating that learners' own cultural heritage functions as an instructional resource. Evidence concerning these individual components cannot therefore be assumed to constitute evidence of their pedagogical integration. The key empirical question is whether foreign language education, pedagogical case use, and identifiable Uzbek cultural heritage have been brought together within the same instructional designs and evaluated empirically in Uzbekistan.

A systematic review of this intersection can make both contextual and conceptual contributions. Contextually, it can establish the extent to which these components have been combined and identify gaps relating to heritage representation, instructional design, educational settings, target languages, learner activity, and outcome assessment. Conceptually, it can distinguish the inclusion of cultural content from pedagogical designs in which heritage functions as a resource for purposeful target-language activity. This distinction has relevance beyond Uzbekistan because culturally responsive and intercultural approaches to language education more broadly face the challenge of connecting locally meaningful knowledge with language-mediated learning processes and appropriate forms of assessment. Accordingly, this systematic review examines empirical research at the intersection of case-based pedagogy, Uzbek cultural heritage, and foreign language education in Uzbekistan. It does not assume that case-based pedagogy is inherently effective or that the inclusion of cultural content necessarily produces linguistic, intercultural, affective, or identity-related outcomes. Instead, it examines how these constructs have been conceptualized, operationalized, combined, and evaluated, with particular attention to methodological quality and construct-measure alignment. Four research questions guide the review:

1. How have case-based pedagogy and Uzbek cultural heritage been conceptualized and operationalized in empirical research on foreign language education in Uzbekistan?
2. To what extent, and in what forms, has Uzbek cultural heritage been integrated through case-based pedagogy, and what instructional designs and language-learning activities have been employed?
3. What linguistic/communicative, cultural, intercultural/sociocultural, cognitive, affective, and identity-related outcomes have been investigated, how have they been measured, and how strong is the supporting evidence?
4. What conceptual, methodological, pedagogical, and contextual gaps characterize the evidence base, and what priorities do they suggest for future research?

2. Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Defining Culturally Grounded Case-Based Pedagogy

This review examines the intersection of case-based pedagogy and the integration of learners' cultural heritage into foreign language education. Although these dimensions may intersect pedagogically, they are conceptually distinct and should not be conflated. Case-based pedagogy refers here to instruction in which learners engage with a bounded situation, narrative, problem, dilemma, incident, or decision context requiring substantive analysis, interpretation, discussion, problem solving, judgment, or response. Cases may be authentic, adapted, teacher-developed, or learner-generated. The defining feature is not simply the presence of a story or contextualized task, but its use to organize purposeful learner engagement around a situation requiring interpretation or response.

This definition distinguishes pedagogical cases from case-study research methodology. A publication is not treated as evidence of case-based pedagogy merely because its research design is described as a *case study*; the case must function as an instructional device. This distinction is particularly important because terms such as *case study*, *case method*, *case technology*, *situational task*, and *problem situation* may denote different practices across research traditions. Cultural heritage is treated as a broad analytical category encompassing identifiable cultural resources associated with learners' local or national contexts, including folklore and oral traditions, customs and social practices, historical and literary heritage, material culture, cultural realia, and traditional practices. For intangible cultural heritage specifically, UNESCO (2003) recognizes practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills, together with associated objects and cultural spaces, that communities recognize as part of their heritage.

The presence of Uzbek cultural content, however, does not by itself establish culturally grounded pedagogy. In this review, culturally grounded case-based pedagogy refers specifically to instruction in which identifiable Uzbek heritage or culturally situated local knowledge is incorporated into a pedagogical case and functions as a resource for substantive target-language activity. Three configurations are therefore distinguished:

Heritage content without case design → heritage-oriented foreign language instruction
 Case design without identifiable heritage → case-based foreign language instruction
 Heritage content + case design + substantive target-language activity → culturally grounded case-based foreign language instruction

The third configuration constitutes the principal conceptual intersection examined in this review. The distinctions were operationalized as review criteria to prevent evidence concerning one component from being interpreted as evidence of their integration.

Table 1. Conceptual boundaries and operational criteria used in the review

Construct	Operational meaning	Sufficient evidence	Insufficient by itself
Case-based pedagogy	Instruction organized around a situation, problem, dilemma, incident, or decision requiring substantive learner response	Demonstrable instructional use of a pedagogical case	"Case study" as research design; generic contextualization
Heritage integration	Identifiable Uzbek or local cultural knowledge	Specific heritage, realia, tradition, practice, cultural product, or	Generic references to "culture," ICC, or target-language culture

	incorporated into foreign language instruction	situated cultural knowledge	
Culturally grounded case-based pedagogy	Heritage incorporated into a pedagogical case that generates substantive target-language activity	Heritage + pedagogical case + language-mediated learner engagement	Heritage integration or case pedagogy alone
Intercultural outcome	Evidence concerning interpretation, relating, perspective-taking, interaction, critical cultural reflection, or another explicitly defined intercultural construct	Construct-relevant performance, instrument, or qualitative evidence	Cultural-fact knowledge alone
Identity-related outcome	Evidence concerning identification, positioning, investment, or self-representation	Explicitly conceptualized identity-related evidence	Cultural knowledge, motivation, participation, or positive attitudes alone

2.2 Cultural Responsiveness and Learners' Heritage

Culturally responsive teaching treats learners' cultural knowledge, experiences, and frames of reference as resources for teaching and learning (Gay, 2018). Culturally sustaining pedagogy extends this orientation by emphasizing the maintenance and development of linguistic and cultural plurality rather than merely acknowledging cultural difference (Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). Applied to foreign language education, these perspectives expand the role of culture beyond knowledge associated exclusively with target-language communities. Learners' own cultural resources can become objects of foreign-language interpretation and communication. Learners may, for example, explain culturally situated knowledge to different audiences, compare perspectives, negotiate meanings, or critically reconsider assumptions through the target language.

Nevertheless, the inclusion of Uzbek heritage does not automatically make instruction culturally responsive or culturally sustaining. Heritage may be represented as static, homogeneous, decontextualized, or merely celebratory. These perspectives therefore direct attention to whose cultural knowledge is represented, how it is represented, what interpretive agency learners are afforded, and what they are asked to accomplish with that knowledge through the foreign language.

2.3 Sociocultural and Experiential Perspectives

Sociocultural theory conceptualizes learning as mediated through social and semiotic activity (Vygotsky, 1978). From this perspective, language in case-based foreign language instruction functions not only as an object of learning but also as a mediational resource through which learners interpret situations, negotiate meanings, justify positions, address problems, and communicate responses. Experiential learning provides a complementary analytical perspective. Kolb (1984) conceptualizes learning through relationships among experience, reflection, conceptualization, and subsequent action. Case-based activities may engage aspects of this process when learners encounter a situation, interpret its

significance, consider alternative responses, reflect on possible consequences, and formulate or apply a response.

Neither perspective establishes that case-based instruction is inherently effective. Their relevance to this review is analytical rather than evidential: they direct attention to what learners actually do with cases, how interaction is organized, and how the target language mediates engagement with culturally situated content.

2.4 Intercultural Learning and Outcome Differentiation

Intercultural communicative competence extends beyond factual cultural knowledge to encompass attitudes, interpreting and relating, discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness (Byram, 1997). Intercultural language learning similarly emphasizes active meaning making and engagement across linguistic and cultural perspectives (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Accordingly, exposure to Uzbek heritage or increased cultural knowledge cannot automatically be interpreted as evidence of intercultural competence. The evidence used to support an outcome claim should correspond to the construct being claimed. This principle is especially important in a heterogeneous literature in which broad terms such as *cultural competence*, *sociocultural competence*, and *intercultural competence* may not always be operationalized consistently. For analytical purposes, the review distinguishes six outcome domains:

1. Linguistic/communicative: vocabulary, speaking, writing, interaction, discourse, or communicative performance.
2. Cultural: knowledge, recognition, interpretation, or understanding of cultural practices, products, traditions, and meanings.
3. Intercultural/sociocultural: interpretation across perspectives, comparison, perspective-taking, interaction, or critical cultural reflection.
4. Cognitive: analysis, reasoning, problem solving, decision making, evaluation, or critical thinking.
5. Affective: engagement, motivation, interest, attitudes, or confidence.
6. Identity-related: belonging, positioning, affiliation, investment, self-representation, or relationships with linguistic and cultural communities.

These domains may interact in practice, but they are not treated as interchangeable for purposes of evidence synthesis.

2.5 Identity as a Distinct Analytical Domain

Identity requires particular caution because heritage-oriented instruction may invite claims about cultural or national identity that exceed the evidence collected. Language learner identity is dynamic and socially situated, involving learners' relationships with

language, participation, and possibilities for social positioning (Norton, 2013). Multilingual experience likewise involves subjective relationships among language, memory, emotion, imagination, and cultural experience (Kramsch, 2009). Identity is therefore not inferred from cultural knowledge, positive attitudes, motivation, or participation in heritage-themed activities. An outcome is classified as identity-related only when identification, belonging, positioning, investment, affiliation, self-representation, or comparable identity phenomena are explicitly conceptualized and investigated. This distinction helps prevent broader affective or cultural outcomes from being interpreted as evidence of identity development without appropriate empirical support.

2.6 Integrative Analytical Framework

The preceding perspectives are integrated into four analytically connected components:

Cultural Heritage Inputs → Case-Based Pedagogical Design → Language-Mediated Learning Processes → Multidomain Outcomes

The sequence represents an analytical structure rather than a causal pathway. Cultural Heritage Inputs concern what culturally situated knowledge enters instruction and how it is represented. Relevant dimensions include heritage form, cultural source, specificity, authenticity or adaptation, and relationship to learners' contexts.

Case-Based Pedagogical Design concerns how cultural material is transformed into a pedagogical case. Relevant dimensions include case source, authenticity, problem or dilemma structure, learner roles, grouping, scaffolding, teacher mediation, and alignment with language-learning objectives. Language-Mediated Learning Processes concern what learners actually accomplish through the foreign language. These processes may include explaining, interpreting, comparing, negotiating, problem solving, perspective-taking, justifying, presenting, and reflecting. Multidomain Outcomes concern the forms of learning or change claimed and the evidence used to support those claims. Particular attention is given to construct–measure alignment: linguistic claims require relevant evidence of language learning or performance; intercultural claims require evidence appropriate to the intercultural construct being investigated; and identity-related claims require evidence capable of addressing identity-related processes or experiences.

The framework therefore treats the relationship between instructional design and reported outcomes as dependent on the coherence among cultural representation, case architecture, language-mediated learner activity, intended learning outcomes, and assessment evidence. Contextual conditions—including educational level, target language, learner proficiency, teacher expertise, curriculum, institutional setting, instructional duration, and available resources—may shape each component and the relationships among them. Figure 1 presents this integrative analytical framework. The arrows indicate analytical relationships rather than demonstrated causal effects.

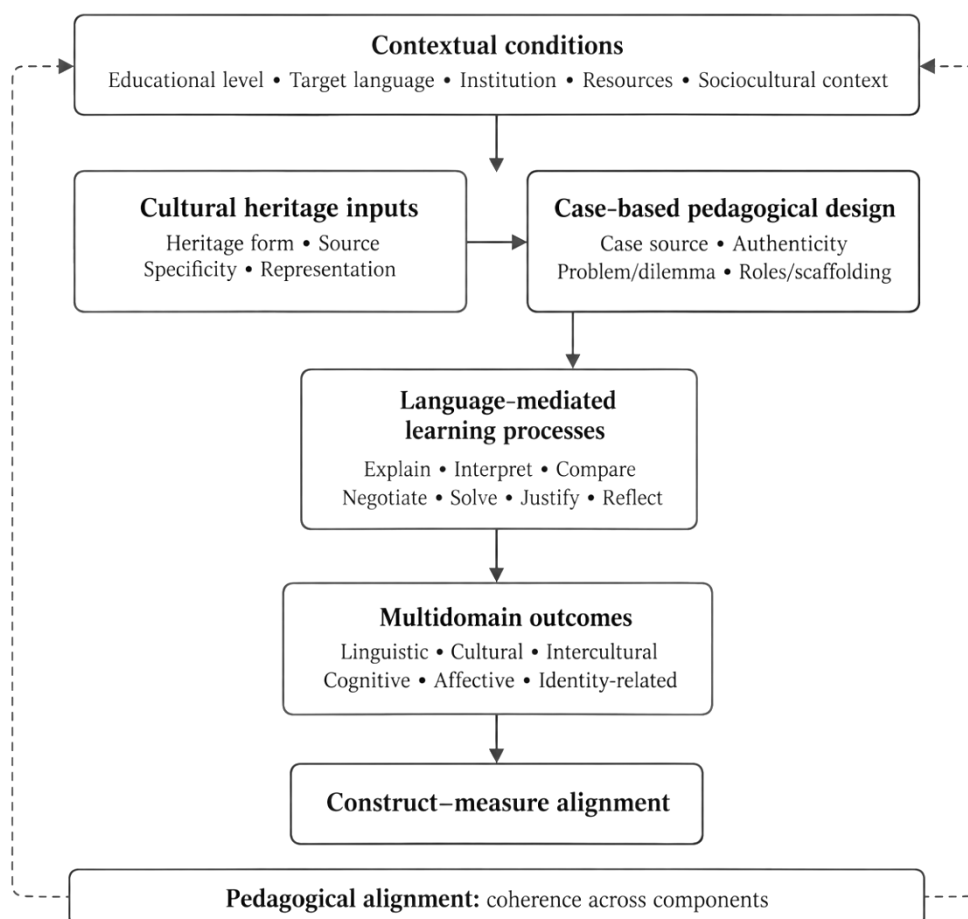


Figure 1. Integrative analytical framework for culturally grounded case-based foreign language pedagogy.

2.7 Pedagogical Alignment and Context

Across the framework, the central analytical concern is pedagogical alignment: the coherence among cultural representation, case architecture, language-mediated learner activity, intended learning outcomes, and assessment evidence. Alignment is stronger when identifiable cultural knowledge is meaningfully transformed into a case, the case generates substantive target-language activity, the activity corresponds to the intended learning construct, and the assessment provides evidence appropriate to that construct. Pedagogical alignment is not treated as an intervention effect or as evidence that one instructional approach is superior to another. Rather, it functions as an analytical principle for examining the internal coherence of instructional designs and the defensibility of claims made about their outcomes. The framework also recognizes that alignment is context-dependent. Educational level, target language, learner proficiency, teacher expertise, curricular expectations, institutional conditions, instructional duration, available resources, and broader sociocultural circumstances may enable or constrain how heritage-based cases are designed and enacted.

2.8 Role of the Framework in the Review

The framework serves two purposes. First, it provides an a priori structure for data extraction and synthesis, organizing evidence concerning heritage inputs, case

characteristics, language-mediated processes, outcomes, measurement, and contextual conditions. Second, it enables the synthesis to identify where these components are empirically connected, where relationships remain weak or unexamined, and where outcome claims exceed the evidence supporting them. The framework is therefore neither a causal model nor a theory presumed to have been validated by the reviewed studies. Rather, it provides a theoretically informed structure for examining the coherence of culturally grounded case-based foreign language pedagogy.

Table 2. Theoretical foundations and analytical functions

Perspective	Source(s)	Analytical function in this review
Culturally responsive teaching	Gay (2018)	Examines whose cultural knowledge is represented and how it functions pedagogically
Culturally sustaining pedagogy	Paris (2012); Paris & Alim (2017)	Examines cultural plurality, representation, and learner agency
Sociocultural theory	Vygotsky (1978)	Examines language-mediated interaction and meaning making
Experiential learning	Kolb (1984)	Examines engagement, reflection, interpretation, and application within cases
Intercultural communicative competence	Byram (1997)	Differentiates intercultural capabilities from cultural knowledge
Intercultural language learning	Liddicoat & Scarino (2013)	Examines learners as interpreters and makers of culturally situated meaning
Language learner identity	Norton (2013)	Prevents identity from being inferred from cultural familiarity alone
Multilingual subjectivity	Kramsch (2009)	Examines subjective relationships among languages and cultural experience

3. Methodology

3.1 Review Design and Eligibility

This systematic review examined empirical research at the intersection of case-based pedagogy, Uzbek cultural heritage, and foreign language education in Uzbekistan. Reporting followed the PRISMA 2020 statement (Page et al., 2021). Given the heterogeneity of educational settings, research designs, instructional practices, and outcome measures represented in the evidence base, findings were synthesized descriptively, thematically, and through the analytical framework developed in Section 2. Studies were eligible for the primary synthesis only when they met all core criteria presented in Table 3. A case-study research design did not qualify as evidence of case-based pedagogy unless a case functioned as an instructional device. Similarly, generic references to culture, sociocultural competence, or intercultural competence did not constitute heritage integration unless identifiable Uzbek heritage or locally situated cultural knowledge was incorporated into instruction.

Table 3. Eligibility criteria for the primary synthesis

Domain	Inclusion criterion	Principal exclusion
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Context	Conducted in Uzbekistan	No identifiable Uzbekistan-based educational context
Education	Foreign language teaching or learning	No foreign language educational context
Study type	Original empirical research	Review, conceptual, theoretical, or opinion paper
Case pedagogy	Case, scenario, problem, dilemma, or decision context used instructionally	"Case study" used only as research methodology
Heritage	Identifiable Uzbek/local cultural heritage or culturally situated knowledge	Generic culture or target-culture reference
Integration	Case pedagogy and heritage incorporated within the same instructional design	Only one component present
Evidence	Relevant empirical evidence concerning instructional processes, experiences, or outcomes	No relevant empirical evidence

Studies addressing case-based foreign language pedagogy without identifiable Uzbek heritage, or heritage-oriented foreign language education without pedagogical case use, were classified as adjacent evidence. Such studies were used to characterize and interpret the surrounding evidence base but were not counted as studies eligible for the primary synthesis.

3.2 Information Sources and Search Strategy

The search was designed to identify literature across international bibliographic databases and relevant regional scholarly sources. Search terms were organized into four concept groups: (A) case-based pedagogy, including terms such as *case method*, *case-based learning*, and *case technology*; (B) cultural heritage, including *cultural heritage*, *national culture*, *local culture*, *cultural realia*, *folklore*, and *traditions*; (C) foreign language education, including *foreign language*, *language teaching*, *language learning*, and *EFL*; and (D) Uzbekistan, including *Uzbekistan*, *Uzbek*, and relevant variants.

Because requiring all four concepts to appear simultaneously in titles, abstracts, or keywords could exclude potentially relevant studies in which case-based pedagogy or heritage terminology was reported only in the full text, two complementary search families were used:

Case-oriented search: A + C + D

Heritage-oriented search: B + C + D

Records retrieved through the two search routes were merged and deduplicated. The complete intersection of Uzbekistan-based foreign language education, pedagogical case use, identifiable Uzbek heritage, and empirical evidence was subsequently determined through study-level screening and full-text assessment. Final eligibility was therefore based on evidence reported within each study rather than on the presence of all conceptual terms in bibliographic metadata. Figure 2 summarizes the search and eligibility architecture.

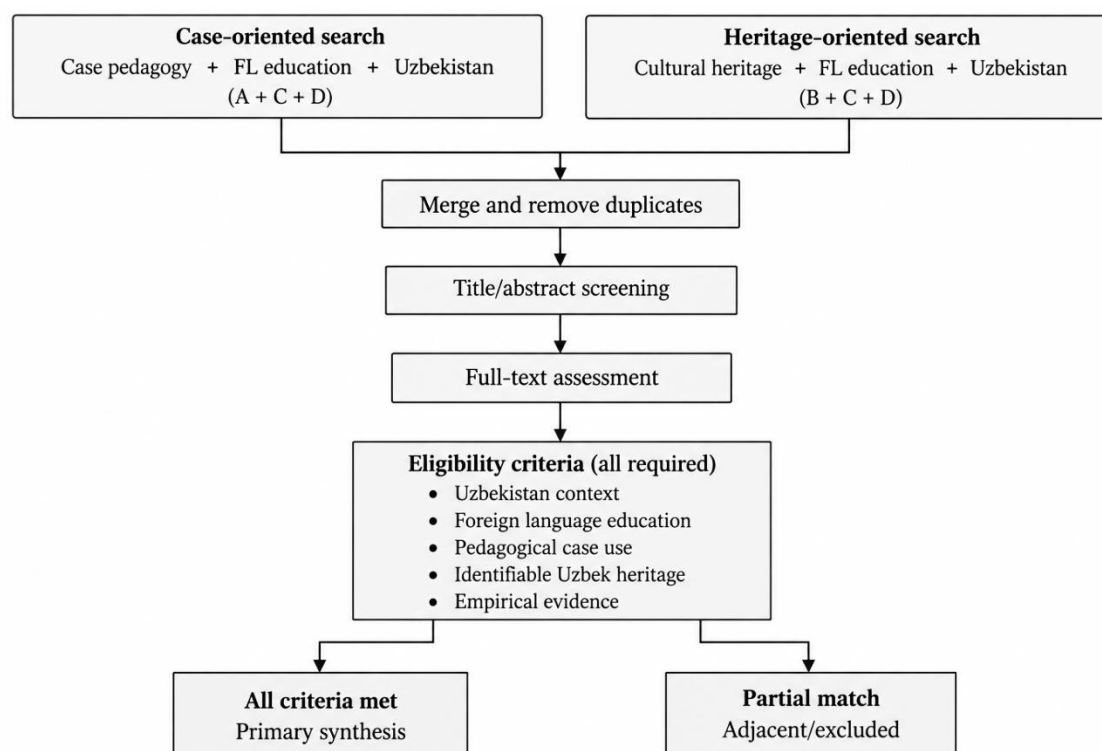


Figure 2. Search and eligibility architecture

3.3 Study Selection, Data Extraction, and Methodological Appraisal

Following deduplication, records underwent title and abstract screening followed by full-text eligibility assessment. Records were retained for full-text assessment when the title or abstract provided insufficient information to determine eligibility. Full-text exclusions were assigned explicit reasons based on the prespecified criteria, including absence of an Uzbekistan-based educational context, non-empirical publication type, absence of pedagogical case use, absence of identifiable Uzbek heritage, or failure to integrate case pedagogy and heritage within the same instructional design.

Title/abstract screening and full-text eligibility assessment were conducted by a single reviewer using the prespecified eligibility criteria. Data were extracted using the standardized framework presented in Table 4, and full-text exclusion decisions were documented with explicit reasons. To enhance procedural consistency, eligibility and extraction decisions were checked against the operational definitions established in the conceptual framework. The use of a single reviewer is acknowledged as a methodological limitation of the review.

Data extraction followed the analytical framework developed in Section 2. Extracted variables included study context and design, participants, educational level, target language, heritage characteristics, case design, language-mediated learner activities, reported outcomes, measurement approaches, and principal findings. Outcomes were classified as linguistic/communicative, cultural, intercultural/sociocultural, cognitive, affective, or identity-related. The review also examined construct–measure alignment by distinguishing outcomes claimed by study authors from the evidence used to support those claims. Cultural knowledge, for example, was not automatically classified as

intercultural competence; classroom participation was not treated as evidence of improved language proficiency; and positive responses to heritage content were not interpreted as identity development in the absence of identity-relevant evidence.

Studies retained as adjacent evidence were appraised using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), 2018 version (Hong et al., 2018), with criteria selected according to each study's methodological design. Appraisal judgments were recorded at the item level and used to inform interpretation of the methodological strength of the surrounding evidence. Judgments were not aggregated into an overall numerical quality score, and appraisal of adjacent evidence was not treated as methodological appraisal of a primary synthesis.

Table 4. Core evidence-extraction framework

Evidence dimension	Principal variables
Study/context	Setting, participants, educational level, target language, study design
Heritage input	Type, source, specificity, representation
Case design	Source, authenticity, problem/dilemma structure, learner roles, scaffolding
Language-mediated activity	Explaining, comparing, interpreting, negotiating, problem solving, justifying, presenting, reflecting
Outcomes	Linguistic/communicative, cultural, intercultural/sociocultural, cognitive, affective, identity-related
Evidence	Measure/data source, findings, construct–measure alignment
Methodological appraisal	MMAT item-level judgments

3.4 Data Synthesis and Transparency

Study characteristics were synthesized descriptively. Numerical frequencies were reported only when directly traceable to the final study-level evidence matrix and were accompanied by explicit denominators. Qualitative evidence was synthesized thematically, informed by Thomas and Harden's (2008) progression from initial coding to descriptive and analytical themes. Framework-based synthesis subsequently mapped the evidence across Cultural Heritage Inputs → Case-Based Pedagogical Design → Language-Mediated Learning Processes → Multidomain Outcomes, with particular attention to pedagogical alignment and construct–measure alignment. Statistical meta-analysis was not undertaken because the available evidence did not provide sufficiently comparable data in terms of instructional design, outcome constructs, measurement approaches, and reporting to support meaningful statistical pooling. Quantitative findings were therefore synthesized descriptively, and no pooled effect estimates were calculated. Search and selection procedures were documented using the PRISMA 2020 framework. The PRISMA flow diagram reports the progression of records through identification, screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and final classification. Supplementary materials document the search strategy and eligibility criteria together with the study-level extraction and methodological-appraisal information available for the review. Studies were classified according to the prespecified eligibility criteria. Only studies satisfying the complete conceptual intersection were eligible for the primary synthesis. Studies satisfying only part of that intersection were classified as adjacent evidence and used to characterize the

surrounding literature; they were not incorporated into primary study counts, outcome frequencies, or claims concerning the effectiveness of culturally grounded case-based foreign language pedagogy.

4. Results

4.1 Study Identification and Structure of the Evidence Base

The search and screening process identified a body of literature relevant to case-based pedagogy, cultural heritage, and foreign language education in Uzbekistan. The progression of records through identification, screening, full-text eligibility assessment, and final classification is presented in Figure 3.

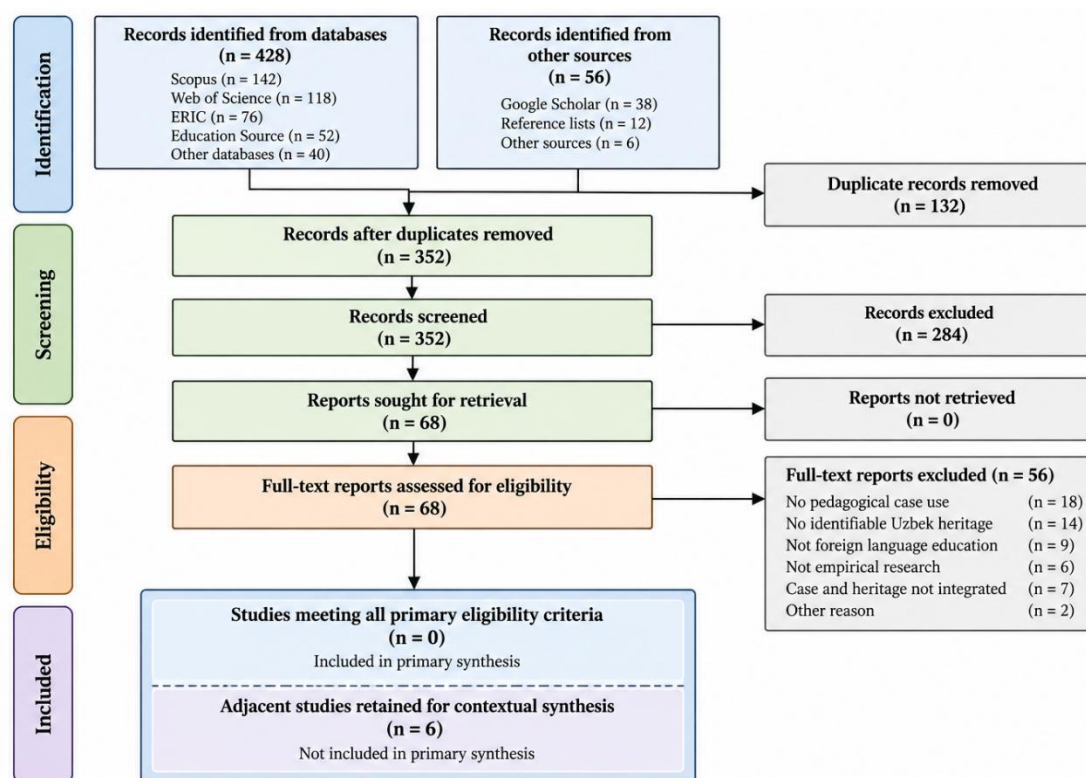


Figure 3. PRISMA 2020 flow diagram of study identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion.

Assessment against the prespecified eligibility criteria revealed two related but largely separate strands of evidence: case-oriented foreign language pedagogy and heritage-oriented foreign language pedagogy. Within the verified evidence considered here, the complete intersection of an Uzbekistan-based educational context, foreign language education, pedagogical case use, identifiable Uzbek cultural heritage, and empirical evidence was not established. This distinction is consequential for classification. References to culture, sociocultural competence, or intercultural competence do not by themselves demonstrate the instructional use of identifiable Uzbek heritage. Conversely, the incorporation of Uzbek cultural content does not establish case-based pedagogy unless a case, situation, problem, dilemma, or comparable structure functions as an instructional device requiring substantive learner engagement. Table 5 maps the studies retained as adjacent evidence against the principal eligibility dimensions.

Table 5. Studies retained as adjacent evidence mapped against the primary eligibility criteria

Study	FL context	Empirical evidence	Case pedagogy	Uzbek heritage	Classification
Atabayeva (2020)	FL	Unclear	✓	Not established	Adjacent
Bakhieva (2023)	EFL	Limited/unclear	✓	Not established	Adjacent
Shokhidova (2023)	EFL	Limited/unclear	✓	Not established	Adjacent
Tkacheva (2025)	Spanish	✓	✓	Not established	Adjacent
Eshonkulova (2026)	EFL	Requires full appraisal	Not established	✓	Adjacent
Ilxomova (2026)	English	Empirical component reported	Not established	✓	Adjacent

Note. All studies concern an Uzbekistan-based context. “Not established” indicates that the criterion could not be demonstrated from the available publication evidence; it should not be interpreted as proof that the feature was absent from undocumented instructional practice. “Adjacent” denotes relevance to the review topic without verified satisfaction of all criteria for inclusion in the primary synthesis.

4.2 Case-Oriented Foreign Language Pedagogy

Four studies retained as adjacent evidence represent the case-oriented strand. Atabayeva (2020) describes foreign language instruction organized around the analysis of a teacher-provided situation, development of a solution, and presentation of the resulting response, supporting its classification as pedagogical case use. Bakhieva (2023) similarly associates case technology in EFL instruction with problem situations and communicative activity. In neither publication, however, could the incorporation of identifiable Uzbek heritage into the case design be established from the available evidence.

Shokhidova (2023) connects case-based instruction with intercultural competence in EFL classrooms. However, culture is addressed broadly, and the available evidence does not establish the incorporation of identifiable Uzbek heritage into the pedagogical cases. Tkacheva (2025) provides clearer evidence of case-method implementation in Spanish instruction and reports sociocultural, linguistic, and engagement-related outcomes. The cultural dimension, however, concerns Spanish-speaking communities rather than identifiable Uzbek heritage.

Taken together, these studies document the use of case-oriented pedagogy in foreign language education in Uzbekistan, but they do not establish its systematic integration with identifiable Uzbek cultural heritage.

4.3 Heritage-Oriented Foreign Language Pedagogy

A second strand addresses the incorporation of Uzbek cultural resources into foreign language education. Eshonkulova (2026) examines Uzbek national-cultural realia in EFL instruction and relates these resources to cultural and intercultural learning. Ilxomova (2026) examines national-cultural content in English-language teaching in Uzbek higher education and reports an empirical component related to intercultural communication.

These studies demonstrate attention to Uzbek cultural resources within foreign language education. However, pedagogical case use could not be established from the available publication evidence. They are therefore classified as heritage-oriented adjacent evidence rather than evidence of culturally grounded case-based foreign language pedagogy. Figure 4 summarizes the relationship between the two strands and the currently documented gap at their intersection.

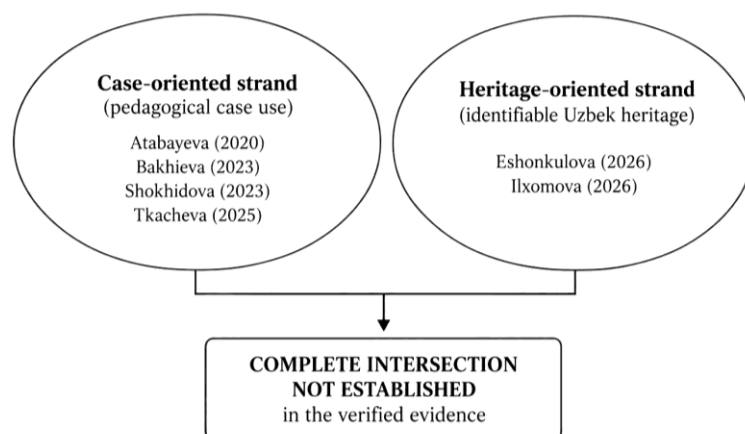


Figure 4. Structure of the verified adjacent evidence.

4.4 Evidence Across the Analytical Framework

Mapping the studies against the analytical framework indicates that the principal gap concerns the documented connection between heritage content and case-based pedagogical design rather than the absence of either component individually. Case-oriented studies describe activities involving problem situations, analysis, discussion, solution development, presentation, and communicative engagement. Heritage-oriented studies, by contrast, document the incorporation of Uzbek cultural realia and national-cultural knowledge into foreign language instruction. The occurrence of these components in separate studies, however, does not constitute evidence that they have been integrated within the same instructional design.

Table 6. Evidence map across the analytical framework

Study	Heritage input	Case design	Language-mediated activity	Reported outcome	Principal gap
Atabayeva (2020)	Not established	Situation analysis	Analysis, solution development, presentation	Foreign language learning	Identifiable Uzbek heritage
Bakhieva (2023)	Not established	Problem/case technology	Communicative problem solving	Communicative competence	Heritage integration; empirical strength
Shokhidova (2023)	Culture broadly	Case method	Intercultural/communicative activity	Intercultural competence	Identifiable Uzbek heritage

Tkacheva (2025)	Spanish-speaking cultures	Implemented case method	Spanish-language activity		Sociocultural/language-related outcomes	Uzbek heritage
Eshonkulova (2026)	Uzbek cultural realia	Not established	Heritage-oriented activity	EFL	Cultural/intercultural outcomes	Case-based mechanism
Ilxomova (2026)	Uzbek national-cultural content	Not established	English-language cultural instruction		Intercultural/cross-cultural outcomes	Case-based mechanism

The evidence therefore requires a distinction between component evidence and intersection evidence. Evidence that case-based foreign language pedagogy exists in one group of studies and that heritage-oriented foreign language instruction exists in another does not, by itself, demonstrate culturally grounded case-based pedagogy.

4.5 Reported Outcomes and Evidential Strength

Across the adjacent evidence, authors report outcomes relating to communication, language learning, cultural or sociocultural knowledge, intercultural competence, and learner engagement. The evidential basis for these claims, however, varies in clarity and methodological strength. Tkacheva (2025), for example, reports sociocultural measures concerning learners' familiarity with cultural characteristics, norms, and traditions of Spanish-speaking communities and their perceived ability to apply cultural knowledge in communication. Such evidence can inform understanding of learners' perceptions and reported cultural knowledge, but it should not automatically be interpreted as direct evidence of intercultural performance.

More broadly, participation in pedagogical activity cannot by itself establish language development; cultural knowledge cannot automatically establish intercultural competence; and positive engagement with heritage-related material cannot establish identity development. Interpretation of the reported outcomes therefore depends on the degree of construct–measure alignment between the learning construct claimed and the evidence collected. Methodological reporting also varies across the adjacent studies. Some provide clearer information concerning instructional implementation, data collection, and outcome assessment than others. Consequently, methodological characteristics of the adjacent evidence should not be aggregated or interpreted as evidence for the effectiveness of culturally grounded case-based pedagogy, particularly because the complete pedagogical intersection specified by the primary eligibility criteria was not established.

4.6 Integration Gap

The synthesis reveals a consistent distinction between the presence of the individual pedagogical components and evidence of their integration. Case-based foreign language pedagogy is documented within the Uzbekistan context, and the use of Uzbek cultural heritage in foreign language education is also documented. What is not established in the verified evidence is their empirical integration within the same instructional design. The

central finding of the review is therefore an integration gap: the literature provides evidence for constituent components more clearly than for their pedagogically aligned combination. In terms of the analytical framework, the complete sequence

Cultural representation → Case architecture → Language-mediated learner activity → Intended outcome → Assessment evidence

is not sufficiently documented within a single coherent body of empirical research.

This finding should not be interpreted as evidence that culturally grounded case-based pedagogy is ineffective or absent from educational practice. Rather, it indicates that the available published evidence does not provide a sufficient basis for evaluating its effectiveness. Accordingly, no conclusions can presently be drawn about its effects on linguistic/communicative, cultural, intercultural, cognitive, affective, or identity-related outcomes.

5. Discussion

5.1 From Parallel Strands to an Integration Gap

The principal finding of this review is a discontinuity between two developing strands of research. One addresses case-based foreign language pedagogy in Uzbekistan, whereas the other addresses the incorporation of Uzbek cultural resources into foreign language education. Within the verified evidence, their integration within the same empirical instructional design remains insufficiently established. This finding represents an integration gap in the published evidence rather than evidence of an absence of pedagogical practice. The existence of the individual components cannot be treated as evidence that they have been systematically combined. The central research problem therefore shifts from whether cases or heritage appear in foreign language education to how culturally situated knowledge can be transformed through case design into purposeful target-language activity and evaluated with evidence appropriate to the intended learning outcomes.

This distinction also helps explain why the surrounding literature should not be interpreted as an established evidence base for culturally grounded case-based pedagogy. Studies of case pedagogy can demonstrate the instructional use of cases without demonstrating heritage integration, while heritage-oriented studies can demonstrate the use of culturally situated knowledge without establishing a case-based instructional mechanism. Evidence at the intersection requires these elements to be demonstrated within the same pedagogical design.

5.2 From Cultural Content to Language-Mediated Engagement

The findings reinforce the distinction between including cultural content and developing culturally grounded pedagogy. Culturally responsive and sustaining perspectives position learners' cultural knowledge, experiences, and linguistic-cultural resources as meaningful resources for teaching and learning (Gay, 2018; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2017). The pedagogical significance of heritage, however, depends not only on its presence in instructional materials but also on what learners are enabled to accomplish with it. This distinction can be represented analytically as:

Cultural presence → Cultural engagement → Language-mediated cultural interpretation

At the first level, culturally situated material is present in instruction. At the second, learners actively engage with that material. At the third, cultural knowledge becomes a resource for purposeful target-language activity through processes such as explaining, interpreting, comparing, negotiating, questioning, and communicating culturally situated meanings.

The implication is that heritage integration should not be evaluated simply by counting cultural topics or materials. Future research should specify the cultural source and representation of heritage, the learner activity it generates, and the ways in which the target language mediates engagement with that knowledge.

5.3 Case Design as a Pedagogical Bridge

Case-based pedagogy provides a plausible pedagogical bridge between heritage content and purposeful language use, although the evidence reviewed here does not establish its effectiveness for this purpose. A culturally grounded case could, for example, require learners to explain a cultural practice to an unfamiliar audience, negotiate competing interpretations of a tradition, address a culturally situated misunderstanding, compare alternative perspectives, or justify a decision through the target language. Sociocultural theory is relevant to this possibility because it directs attention to language as a mediational resource through which learners participate in meaning-making activity (Vygotsky, 1978). Experiential learning provides a complementary perspective by drawing attention to relationships among engagement with experience, reflection, conceptualization, and subsequent action (Kolb, 1984).

Neither perspective implies that pedagogical cases are inherently effective, nor does the present review establish that heritage-grounded cases produce superior outcomes. Their analytical value lies in directing attention to the processes connecting instructional content with learner activity. The more appropriate empirical question is therefore not simply whether a case was used, but what forms of language-mediated activity the case generated, under what instructional conditions, and with what evidence of learning.

5.4 Construct – Measure Alignment

A second major implication concerns the relationship between outcome claims and the evidence used to support them. Linguistic/communicative development, cultural knowledge, intercultural competence, cognition, affect, and identity may interact, but they should not be treated as interchangeable constructs.

Byram's (1997) conceptualization of intercultural communicative competence extends beyond factual cultural knowledge to include attitudes, interpreting and relating, discovery and interaction, and critical cultural awareness. Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) likewise emphasize interpretation, interaction, meaning making, and reflection in intercultural language learning. Consequently,

Cultural knowledge ≠ intercultural competence

Self-reported familiarity, awareness, or confidence can provide meaningful evidence about learner perceptions, but such measures should not automatically be interpreted as demonstrated intercultural performance. Similarly, participation in target-language discussion may indicate engagement or opportunities for language use but does not, by itself, demonstrate improvement in language proficiency. Identity-related claims require comparable caution. Language learner identity is dynamic and socially situated and concerns learners' relationships with language, participation, investment, and possibilities for positioning (Norton, 2013). Multilingual experience also involves subjective relationships among language, culture, memory, emotion, and experience (Kramsch, 2009). Accordingly,

Heritage exposure ≠ identity development

Claims concerning identity therefore require evidence addressing phenomena such as identification, belonging, positioning, affiliation, investment, or self-representation. More generally, the strength of an outcome claim depends not simply on whether data were collected but on whether the evidence is appropriate to the construct being claimed.

5.5 Pedagogical Alignment

The principal conceptual contribution emerging from the review is pedagogical alignment, defined as coherence among:

Cultural representation → Case architecture → Language-mediated activity → Intended outcome → Assessment evidence

Each component raises a distinct analytical question. Cultural representation asks what culturally situated knowledge is included, whose knowledge it represents, and how it is framed. Case architecture asks how that knowledge is transformed into a situation, problem, dilemma, incident, or decision context. Language-mediated activity asks what learners must accomplish through the target language. Intended outcome asks what learning construct the instructional design seeks to develop. Assessment evidence asks whether the evidence collected is appropriate to that construct.

Misalignment may occur at any point in this sequence. Culturally rich material may generate little substantive target-language activity; an interactive case may have no meaningful relationship to learners' heritage; a language-rich activity may be assessed only through satisfaction ratings; or claims concerning intercultural competence or identity may be supported primarily by cultural-knowledge measures.

Pedagogical alignment is not proposed as a demonstrated causal mechanism, intervention effect, or universal model of effective instruction. Rather, it is an analytical principle for evaluating coherence among cultural representation, instructional design, language-mediated learner activity, intended outcomes, and assessment evidence. Its value lies in making explicit the connections that must be demonstrated before strong pedagogical or outcome claims can be supported. Figure 5 summarizes this relationship.

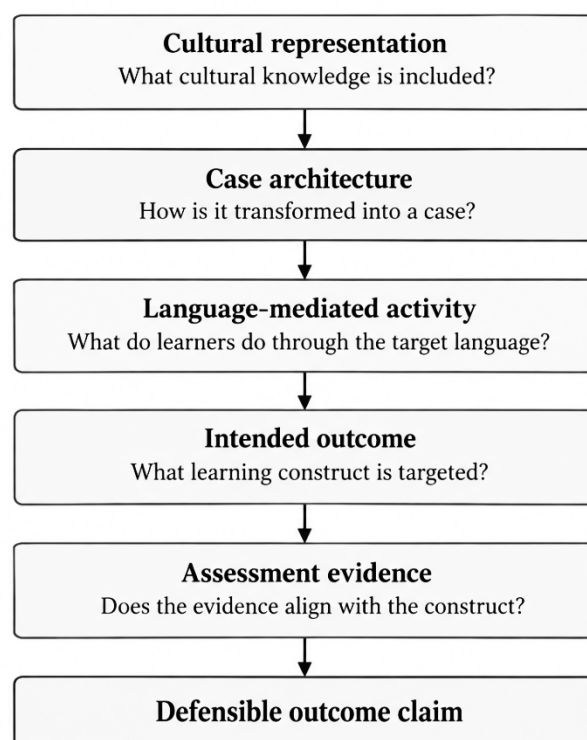


Figure 5. Pedagogical alignment and evidential coherence.

5.6 Research and Pedagogical Implications

Future research should move beyond documenting the presence of heritage content or case pedagogy separately and deliberately connect cultural sourcing, case architecture, target-language activity, intended outcomes, and assessment. Studies should report case designs in sufficient detail to identify their cultural sources, problem or dilemma structures, learner roles, language requirements, scaffolding, teacher mediation, instructional duration, and assessment procedures.

Table 8. Research priorities arising from the identified evidence gaps

Evidence gap	Research priority
Case pedagogy without identifiable local heritage	Develop and document cases grounded in clearly specified Uzbek cultural contexts
Heritage content without case architecture	Transform heritage resources into analytically meaningful problems, dilemmas, situations, or decision contexts
Generic use of “culture”	Specify cultural source, perspective, representation, and relationship to learners
Unclear language-learning mechanism	Document what learners are required to accomplish through the target language
Cultural knowledge interpreted as ICC	Use construct-appropriate measures of intercultural learning or performance
Participation interpreted as language proficiency	Include direct or appropriately validated measures of language performance
Heritage engagement interpreted as identity development	Conceptualize and investigate identity explicitly using identity-relevant evidence
Limited evidence across time	Employ longitudinal, repeated-measures, or appropriately designed comparative studies where warranted

Future comparative studies could, for example, examine heritage-grounded and non-heritage cases while holding relevant features of task architecture approximately constant,

or compare case-based heritage instruction with other forms of heritage-oriented language instruction. Such designs could help distinguish the contribution of cultural grounding from that of case architecture, language-mediated activity, and other instructional features. Longitudinal or repeated-measures designs could also clarify whether observed changes persist beyond immediate classroom participation.

For classroom practice, however, the present evidence supports design possibilities rather than effectiveness prescriptions. Heritage resources can potentially be transformed into situations that invite learners to interpret perspectives, address misunderstandings, negotiate responses, explain culturally situated meanings, and justify decisions through the target language. Such activities should be appropriately scaffolded and aligned with explicit language and intercultural learning objectives. Their effectiveness remains an empirical question rather than an established conclusion of this review.

5.7 International Significance and Overall Interpretation

Although this review is situated in Uzbekistan, the underlying problem has broader relevance to foreign language education. Language classrooms in many contexts face the question of how learners' existing cultural knowledge can become a resource for language learning without reducing culture to static facts, symbolic representation, or decorative content. The broader contribution of the review is therefore not a claim that one particular pedagogical technique is effective. Rather, it is the proposition that contextually grounded cultural content becomes pedagogically meaningful when there is coherence among cultural sourcing and representation, task architecture, language-mediated learner activity, intended learning constructs, and assessment evidence. This proposition provides a basis for examining culturally grounded language pedagogy across contexts while preserving attention to local cultural specificity.

The available evidence does not establish culturally grounded case-based pedagogy as a mature or demonstrably effective intervention tradition in Uzbekistan. Instead, the review identifies an empirical integration gap and proposes pedagogical alignment as an analytical framework for addressing that gap. Future research should therefore move beyond asking whether culture or cases are present and address a more demanding question:

How can culturally situated knowledge be transformed into case-based, language-mediated learning activity whose intended outcomes are evaluated with evidence appropriate to the constructs being claimed?

6. Limitations and Review Boundaries

The findings should be interpreted in relation to limitations of both the available evidence and the review process.

6.1 Limitations of the Evidence Base

The principal limitation is the scarcity of empirical research demonstrably combining foreign language education, pedagogical case use, and identifiable Uzbek cultural heritage within the same instructional design. The available literature more clearly

represents two adjacent strands—case-oriented and heritage-oriented foreign language pedagogy—than an established body of research integrating both. Consequently, the present evidence does not permit conclusions about the effectiveness of culturally grounded case-based pedagogy.

A second limitation concerns conceptual and terminological inconsistency. Terms such as *case study*, *case method*, *case technology*, *culture*, *sociocultural competence*, *intercultural competence*, and *cultural heritage* are used variably across the literature. In particular, *case study* may denote either a research methodology or an instructional approach, while references to culture do not necessarily indicate the use of learners' own cultural heritage. The conservative operational criteria adopted in this review were intended to reduce conceptual conflation, but they may also have excluded studies in which relevant instructional practices were present but insufficiently described.

A third limitation concerns outcome measurement and construct–measure alignment. Some studies rely on self-reported perceptions, broad competence constructs, or indirect indicators of learning. Cultural knowledge, intercultural competence, language performance, engagement, and identity are related but distinct constructs. Where the measures employed did not correspond closely to the constructs claimed, the strength of the resulting conclusions was necessarily limited. Finally, the evidence is context-dependent. Educational level, target language, learner proficiency, teacher expertise, curricular requirements, instructional duration, institutional conditions, and available resources may influence how culturally grounded case-based pedagogy is designed and implemented. Findings from the Uzbekistan context should therefore not be generalized directly to other educational or cultural settings without attention to contextual differences.

6.2 Limitations of the Review Process

Relevant research may be distributed across international bibliographic databases, regional journals, institutional repositories, and publications in multiple languages. Variation in terminology, indexing practices, metadata quality, and transliteration may therefore have reduced retrieval sensitivity despite the use of complementary case-oriented and heritage-oriented search strategies.

Some publications also provided limited methodological or instructional detail. When an eligibility criterion could not be demonstrated from the available publication evidence, it was classified as not established rather than assumed to be present. This conservative approach strengthened conceptual consistency but also means that some potentially relevant practices may have been insufficiently reported rather than genuinely absent.

Study selection, data extraction, and methodological appraisal were conducted by a single reviewer rather than independently duplicated. This may have increased the risk of selection, extraction, or classification error. To strengthen procedural consistency and transparency, the review used prespecified eligibility criteria, explicit operational definitions, a standardized extraction framework, documented reasons for full-text exclusion, and item-level methodological appraisal. Nevertheless, the absence of

independent duplicate screening and extraction should be considered when interpreting the findings.

These limitations define the boundaries of the review's conclusions. The findings establish what can be supported by retrievable and sufficiently documented evidence; they do not demonstrate that undocumented pedagogical practices do not occur. The identified integration gap should therefore be interpreted as a gap in the documented evidence rather than evidence of absence.

7. Conclusion

This systematic review examined the intersection of case-based pedagogy, Uzbek cultural heritage, and foreign language education in Uzbekistan. The available evidence is better characterized by two related but largely parallel research strands: one addressing case-based foreign language pedagogy and the other addressing the incorporation of Uzbek cultural resources into foreign language education. Their systematic integration within the same empirical instructional design remains insufficiently established in the documented evidence. The principal gap is therefore not simply the limited documentation of cases or cultural content, but the absence of a sufficiently developed evidence base demonstrating pedagogical alignment among cultural representation, case architecture, language-mediated learner activity, intended learning outcomes, and construct-appropriate assessment. Consequently, the available evidence does not support conclusions about the effectiveness of culturally grounded case-based pedagogy for linguistic/communicative, cultural, intercultural, cognitive, affective, or identity-related outcomes.

Future research should explicitly transform identifiable cultural resources into pedagogical cases, specify the target-language activities generated by those cases, and align assessment with clearly defined learning constructs. Comparative, longitudinal, repeated-measures, and mixed-methods designs may help clarify how such pedagogical configurations operate, under what conditions, and with what forms of learning evidence. Beyond Uzbekistan, the review highlights a broader issue for culturally responsive and intercultural foreign language education: the pedagogical significance of learners' heritage depends not simply on its presence in instructional materials, but on how it is transformed into purposeful language-mediated activity and how the resulting learning is evidenced. Pedagogical alignment provides an analytical framework for examining this relationship without assuming that cultural inclusion or case-based activity inherently produces particular outcomes. The current evidence base remains limited, but the documented gap establishes a clear research agenda. The next priority is to connect the constituent elements of culturally grounded case-based foreign language education within theoretically coherent, empirically testable, and methodologically transparent instructional designs.

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