

French and Uzbek Month Names as Linguocultural Units: Etymology, Norm and Discursive function

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates French and Uzbek month names as linguocultural units and examines them from etymological, nominative, normative, and discursive perspectives. The study proceeds from the assumption that month names are not merely neutral calendrical labels used to segment time in practical communication, but that they also preserve traces of historical memory, cultural experience, symbolic thinking, and socially shared models of temporal organization. In the French linguistic tradition, month names retain strong links with Roman mythology, political history, and earlier systems of calendrical enumeration, while in Uzbek the standardized literary sequence largely reflects adapted Gregorian forms that coexist with older zodiacal and Hijri lunar designations. The article analyzes the historical foundations of these names, the principles underlying their nomination, their orthographic and stylistic normalization, and the expressive functions they acquire in literary discourse. Particular attention is paid to the ways in which month names move beyond their denotative role and become carriers of seasonal symbolism, emotional atmosphere, recollection, and evaluative meaning. The comparative analysis demonstrates that the French system is characterized by stronger etymological transparency and more visible preservation of ancient cultural strata, whereas the Uzbek system reveals a multilayered interaction between official norm, folk temporality, and religious-cultural memory. The findings are relevant to comparative linguistics,

linguoculturology, translation studies, onomastics, and research on language norm.

Keywords: Month names, calendar vocabulary, linguoculture, nomination, etymology, onomastics, discourse, connotation, French, Uzbek

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between language and culture occupies a central place in contemporary linguoculturology, since linguistic units are increasingly understood not only as means of naming objects, processes, and relations, but also as forms in which collective experience, cultural memory, and value systems are preserved and transmitted. From this perspective, language does not merely reflect reality in a neutral way; rather, it structures reality through historically and culturally shaped categories. Among the lexical domains that most clearly reveal this interaction between language and culture, calendar vocabulary deserves particular attention. The names of weekdays, months, and seasons constitute one of the most stable lexical systems in any language because they are tied to the fundamental human need to organize time, coordinate social life, and relate everyday practice to cyclical natural and cultural processes.

However, calendar vocabulary should not be reduced to a purely technical instrument of chronological designation. Even highly conventional temporal labels may retain traces of ancient systems of thought, ritual practice, political authority, agrarian observation, mythological imagination, and confessional tradition. Month names are especially significant in this respect, because they occupy an intermediate position between abstract temporal measurement and culturally meaningful categorization. On the one hand, they are elements of a fixed calendar system; on the other hand, they may serve as markers of symbolic time, collective memory, and poetic temporality. For this reason, month names may be analyzed not merely as units of chronological notation, but as linguocultural units whose meaning extends beyond straightforward denotation.

In French, month names are directly linked to the Latin-Roman tradition, and their etymological structure preserves multiple historical layers. Some of these names derive from mythological figures, such as *Janus*, *Mars*, *Maia*, and *Juno*; others reflect Roman political history through their association with *Julius Caesar* and *Augustus*; still others preserve earlier numerical designations whose original logic no longer coincides with the modern order of the months. In Uzbek, by contrast, the literary norm is mainly based on adapted forms of the Gregorian month names, which entered the language through processes of cultural borrowing, standardization, and administrative normalization. Yet this official and literary system does not exhaust the temporal nomination patterns available in Uzbek. Alongside the internationally standardized month names, there remain parallel layers in popular and cultural memory, including zodiacal month names such as *Hamal*, *Savr*, and *Javzo*, as well as *Hijri* lunar months connected with Islamic temporal reckoning. The coexistence of these layers makes the Uzbek system of month names especially significant for linguocultural study, since it brings together official chronology, folk cosmology, seasonal experience, and religious time.

The relevance of the present article lies in the fact that month names in French and Uzbek are often discussed only within grammatical, orthographic, or lexicographic frameworks, whereas their etymological motivation, nominative structure, normative use, and expressive potential in literary discourse have not been sufficiently examined as interconnected aspects of a single system. In most descriptions, these units appear either as part of the calendar lexicon or as orthographic items subject to capitalization and usage rules. Such approaches, although useful, leave aside the broader question of how month names function as carriers of cultural meaning and how they activate additional layers of interpretation in actual discourse.

The purpose of this article is therefore to provide a comparative linguocultural analysis of French and Uzbek month names by examining four interrelated dimensions: their etymological foundations, their nomination patterns, their orthographic and normative features, and their discursive-

semantic functioning in literary texts. In order to achieve this aim, the study addresses the following research questions: first, what historical and cultural layers underlie French and Uzbek month names; second, how are these names formalized within orthographic and stylistic norms; third, what semantic and pragmatic functions do month names perform in literary discourse; and fourth, what practical conclusions can be drawn from the similarities and differences observed between the two systems, especially for linguocultural interpretation and translation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical basis for interpreting month names as linguocultural units may be found in works devoted to linguoculturology, phraseology, onomastics, and the theory of nomination. Although month names themselves are not always treated as a separate object of analysis in these fields, the methodological principles developed within them make it possible to examine temporal lexical units as culturally marked signs.

V. A. Maslova defines linguoculturology as a field that systematically studies the relationship between language and culture, with particular attention to the ways in which values, stereotypes, symbolic meanings, and nationally specific patterns of thought are embedded in linguistic forms [1]. In this framework, lexical and onomastic units are understood as especially important because they often preserve a culturally condensed form of knowledge. Their significance lies not only in what they denote, but also in the evaluative and interpretive background they carry. Applied to month names, this approach suggests that such units should not be viewed merely as formal designations of calendar intervals. Rather, they may preserve traces of historical organization, religious symbolism, cultural habit, and collective experience.

This observation becomes particularly relevant when one considers that month names belong to a lexical field that organizes time in socially shared terms. Time itself may be

experienced physically, psychologically, historically, ritually, and symbolically, yet in language it is segmented into recognizable categories that allow a speech community to coordinate action and memory. Month names belong to this sphere of temporal segmentation, but they do so in a way that often reveals older layers of social and cultural organization. In other words, they encode not just chronology, but historically sedimented forms of temporal consciousness.

The work of V. N. Teliya is equally significant for the present study. Teliya demonstrates that linguistic units may acquire secondary meanings in cultural context and that discourse activates these meanings by drawing on shared evaluative and symbolic associations [2]. According to this view, a word is not limited to its dictionary meaning. Once it functions within a cultural environment, it accumulates additional layers of significance related to collective memory, historical experience, customs, value judgments, and inherited forms of interpretation. Such added meaning becomes especially visible in discourse, where linguistic units may evoke moods, stereotypes, or symbolic frameworks that are not reducible to their denotative content.

This insight is particularly productive for the analysis of month names in literary discourse. A month name may denote a position in the calendar, but in poetic or narrative usage it may simultaneously evoke a season, a state of mind, a remembered event, or a culturally familiar atmosphere. Thus, a unit such as *novembre* or *sentjabr* may function not only as a temporal marker, but also as a symbolic sign that structures the emotional and interpretive field of a text. Teliya's theory therefore helps explain how month names may move from denotation to connotation, from chronological reference to cultural and poetic signification.

Within onomastic theory, the work of A. V. Superanskaya provides an essential methodological foundation. Her general theory of proper names emphasizes the structural and functional diversity of naming systems and draws attention to the ways in which names encode social, historical, and classificatory knowledge [3]. Although month names occupy a somewhat

intermediate status between proper and common nouns in different languages, they clearly belong to the broader sphere of culturally organized nomination. Their historical origins, formal stabilization, and functional differentiation can therefore be fruitfully examined through an onomastic lens.

V. A. Nikonov's work further supports such an approach by showing that naming practices cannot be fully understood outside their historical and social background [4]. Names are not arbitrary labels detached from lived reality; they emerge within concrete cultural settings and often preserve the traces of those settings long after their original motivational basis has become opaque. In the case of month names, this principle is especially evident. The modern user of a language may no longer consciously relate *janvier* to *Janus* or *septembre* to the number seven, yet the name itself preserves evidence of earlier cultural and calendrical systems. A similar phenomenon can be observed in Uzbek, where officially normalized month names coexist with folk and religious temporal nomenclature, thereby revealing different historical layers of nomination.

From the perspective of linguocultural analysis, then, month names can be seen as temporal signs in which several semantic strata intersect: denotative chronological meaning, etymological memory, cultural symbolism, and discursive reactivation. The literature discussed above provides the conceptual tools necessary for analyzing these strata comparatively in French and Uzbek.

METHODS

The present study adopts an interdisciplinary approach that combines linguoculturology, onomastics, nomination theory, and discourse analysis. Such a combination is required because the object under investigation cannot be adequately described through a single method. Month names represent a lexical subsystem, yet they also function as culturally meaningful signs, historically motivated designations, and discursive markers whose full significance becomes visible only when several analytical dimensions are brought together.

The first analytical procedure employed is etymological analysis. This method is used to identify the historical roots of month names and to determine the source layers from which they derive. In the case of French, etymological analysis makes it possible to trace month names back to Latin forms and to identify the mythological, political, and numerical motivations encoded in them. In the case of Uzbek, etymological analysis helps distinguish between officially standardized borrowed forms and parallel layers of temporal nomination rooted in zodiacal or religious systems.

The second procedure is nomination analysis, which focuses on the logic of naming. Here the central question is not merely where a name comes from historically, but on what semantic or symbolic basis it was assigned. This method allows the study to differentiate between eponymic, mythological, numerical, adapted-borrowed, symbolic, and folk-cultural models of nomination. Such analysis is especially useful for comparing the relative transparency or opacity of month-name systems in the two languages.

The third procedure is normative-graphic analysis, which examines spelling, capitalization, morphological behavior, and stylistic conventions. Since month names form part of everyday written usage, their orthographic and grammatical treatment is an important aspect of their linguistic status. In French and Uzbek, these conventions differ in certain respects, and these differences have consequences for translation, language teaching, and stylistic practice.

The fourth procedure is discursive-semantic analysis. This method investigates the functioning of month names in literary discourse and focuses on the transition from denotative to connotative meaning. Through this approach, month names are treated not only as lexical items, but as expressive units capable of shaping mood, structuring narrative time, activating memory, and generating symbolic resonance.

The material analyzed in this study consists of French and Uzbek month names as codified in the standard language, supplemented by literary examples in which these names appear in poetically or semantically significant positions. These

examples are not intended to provide an exhaustive corpus, but rather to illustrate the principal discursive functions through which month names acquire additional meaning.

RESULTS

The findings of the study may be summarized under three major headings: first, the etymological and cultural layers of French month names; second, the normative structure and variation of Uzbek month names; and third, the discursive and expressive functions of month names in literary texts.

The etymological and cultural layers of French month names

French month names display a remarkable degree of historical continuity, since most of them derive directly from Latin forms associated with the Roman calendar. This continuity is not merely formal; it also preserves several layers of cultural memory. A close analysis of the French month-name system reveals at least three major motivational types: mythological designation, political or commemorative naming, and numerical designation inherited from an earlier calendrical order.

The first type includes names associated with Roman deities or mythological imagery. *Janvier* derives from Janus, the two-faced Roman god of beginnings, thresholds, and transitions. The semantic fit is particularly transparent here, since January marks the symbolic opening of the year and thus corresponds naturally to a deity associated with passage from one state to another. *Février* is linked to Latin *februa* or *februum*, terms associated with purification rituals performed in ancient Rome. The month therefore retains a ritual-cultural layer connected with cleansing and transition. *Mars* derives from Mars, the Roman god of war, while *juin* is associated with *Juno*, a deity connected with marriage and family. *Mai* is traditionally linked with *Maia*, and *avril* is traced to the Latin *aprilis*, frequently interpreted in connection with the opening or blossoming of spring [5], [6]. What is significant in all these cases is that the month name does not function as an arbitrary chronological label, but as a linguistic form that preserves a culturally motivated designation.

The second type includes names grounded in political history. *Juillet* and *août* are among the clearest examples of commemorative naming in the calendar. *Juillet* was named after *Julius Caesar*, and *août* after *Emperor Augustus*. These forms show that temporal nomenclature may become a site of political inscription, where the annual cycle is symbolically linked to imperial authority. Such naming practices transform the calendar into a cultural artifact shaped not only by cosmological or seasonal observation, but also by power and political memory.

The third type includes names whose internal structure reflects an earlier numerical logic. *Septembre*, *octobre*, *novembre*, and *décembre* derive respectively from Latin *septem*, *octo*, *novem*, and *decem*, meaning seven, eight, nine, and ten. In the modern calendar, however, these are the ninth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth months. This discrepancy is not an error but a linguistic fossil preserving evidence of an older calendar order in which the year began at a different point. The continued use of these names in their inherited form demonstrates the persistence of linguistic memory. Even when the original motivation has become opaque to ordinary speakers, the linguistic form continues to carry a trace of its historical origin.

From a linguocultural point of view, this feature of French month names is highly significant. The system as a whole reveals that temporal vocabulary may preserve different civilizational layers simultaneously: religious imagination, political authority, calendrical history, and lexical continuity. As a result, French month names may be described as relatively etymologically transparent in comparison with many standardized systems of borrowed temporal nomenclature. They continue to offer access, at least analytically, to the cultural history embedded in the lexicon.

The normative structure and variation of Uzbek month names

The Uzbek literary language uses the January-December sequence largely in the form of adapted Gregorian names. These names have become standardized through administrative, educational, and media practice, and their current function is primarily official and chronological. In contrast to French, where

the etymological motivation remains historically accessible through the native lexical tradition, the Uzbek forms are mostly experienced synchronically as normalized borrowed designations. Their cultural significance therefore lies not primarily in semantic transparency, but in the fact that they reveal how an international calendar system has been integrated into the Uzbek linguistic environment.

One of the most visible aspects of this integration is phonetic and graphic adaptation. The borrowed month names have been adjusted to the phonological and orthographic norms of Uzbek and now function as ordinary common nouns within the grammatical system. They are written with lowercase initial letters and readily combine with case suffixes and postpositions, as in *yanvarda*, *martningoxiri*, *sentabrgaqadar*, or *dekabrbilanbog'liq*. They may also occur in expanded constructions such as *yanvaroyida* or *apreloyiningboshida*, where the noun *oy* adds explicit temporal specification and often improves stylistic clarity.

This normative integration, however, should not be mistaken for cultural simplicity. The Uzbek month-name system is not monolithic. Alongside the officially standardized Gregorian sequence, there exists a parallel layer of temporal designation preserved in folk and cultural practice. This includes the zodiacal month names *Hamal*, *Savr*, *Javzo*, *Saraton*, *Asad*, *Sunbula*, *Mezon*, *Aqrab*, *Qavs*, *Jadiy*, *Dalv*, and *Hut*. These names are not merely exotic lexical survivals. They reflect a different model of temporal consciousness in which annual cyclicity is linked to celestial observation, seasonal transition, and agrarian life. Their use activates a folk-cultural framework of time that differs from bureaucratic calendar standardization and often carries stronger associative links with seasonal rhythm and traditional experience.

In addition, the Uzbek linguistic and cultural sphere also preserves Hijri lunar month names associated with Islamic time reckoning. These names constitute yet another temporal layer, one shaped by religious observance, ritual cycles, and confessional tradition. Their presence demonstrates that month names in Uzbek cannot be interpreted solely within a secular administrative frame. Instead, the lexicon of months reflects the

coexistence of several systems of temporal organization: official-modern, folk-astronomical, and religious-lunar.

The linguocultural complexity of this situation becomes especially clear when proposals arise to rename the months in explicitly national-cultural terms. Suggestions such as replacing or symbolically reinterpreting month names through figures like *Vatan*, *Navoiy*, or *MirzoUlug'bek* show that the naming of months may also be imagined as a site of cultural identity formation. In such proposals, the month name ceases to be a neutral time marker and becomes a potential emblem of national memory. Whether or not such proposals become normalized in practice, they are analytically significant because they reveal that the calendar remains symbolically open to reinterpretation.

Thus, the Uzbek system of month names may be described as stratified rather than uniform. Its officially codified layer reflects international standardization, while its broader cultural ecology includes folk, religious, and symbolic forms of temporal nomination. This multilayered structure is one of the most important findings of the present analysis.

The discursive and expressive functions of month names in literary texts

The literary examples analyzed in this study show that month names often function in discourse in ways that far exceed their denotative role as calendar labels. In literary texts they may organize atmosphere, intensify memory, structure emotional temporality, and guide the reader's interpretation of scene and mood. Their linguistic function thus expands from objective temporal reference to symbolic and affective signification.

One of the principal discursive functions of month names is the activation of seasonal imagery. A month name may immediately evoke a recognizable environmental and emotional frame: warmth, decline, blossoming, stillness, ripeness, coldness, fading light, or renewal. This function can be seen in the Uzbek example:

Sentyabrquyoshisilaydiliq
Yuzimiz, yelkamiz, qo'llarimizni [7]

Here *sentyabr* is not merely a chronological indicator. It serves as the semantic center of a softly illuminated autumn scene. The month name activates a culturally familiar image of early autumn, one associated not yet with harsh decline, but with mild warmth and reflective calm. In this way, the unit generates more than temporal reference; it organizes a climatic and emotional field.

A second important function of month names in literary discourse is the activation of psychological or inner temporality. This is especially evident in the French poetic line:

*Il fait novembre en mon âme —
Et c'est le vent du Nord qui clame* [8].

In this case, *novembre* no longer refers to a calendar month in any direct sense. Instead, it names an inner state. The expression *il fait novembre* normally presupposes an atmospheric condition, but when transferred to the soul through *en mon âme*, it becomes a metaphorical sign of emotional climate. The month name here condenses associations of coldness, greyness, inner depletion, and existential narrowing. It is precisely this shift from external temporality to interiorized temporality that makes month names so productive in poetic discourse.

A third function concerns recollection and memory. Month names may serve as signals that reawaken entire experiential complexes. This can be seen in the Uzbek passage:

*Aprel. Olmaota. Tongotar. Jimlik.
Biryengilshabbodaoqadiravon* [9]

The syntax of this fragment is deliberately segmented. Instead of continuous narration, the reader receives isolated coordinates: month, place, moment, stillness. The effect resembles mnemonic reconstruction. In such a structure, *Aprel* does not merely answer the question “when?” It functions as an index of memory, a signal charged with historical and emotional resonance. The month name becomes part of a compressed experiential constellation in which time is inseparable from place, event, and psychological aftermath.

A similar function appears in the French example:

*Je me souviens des soirs en mai sur la terrasse
L'odeur d'un oranger engourdissait l'espace* [10].

Here *maïis* embedded in an explicit act of recollection. Yet the phrase *enmai* does more than locate the remembered evenings in time. It evokes a specific sensory and emotional atmosphere associated with late spring: fragrance, softness, open space, and lingering stillness. The month name serves as a semantic trigger through which memory becomes sensorially and affectively recoverable. In this sense, month names may operate as compact cultural signs that condense an entire field of shared seasonal and emotional meanings.

The literary data therefore confirm that month names in discourse may serve at least three interrelated expressive functions: they may create seasonal imagery, externalize or interiorize emotional states, and reactivate memory. In all these cases, their denotative temporal value remains present but is no longer sufficient to account for their role in the text. What becomes central instead is their ability to mobilize culturally familiar associations that link time with nature, history, feeling, and recollection.

DISCUSSION

The comparative findings suggest that French and Uzbek month names reveal different but equally significant modes of interaction between linguistic form and cultural memory.

French month names preserve a stronger degree of etymological legibility. Their forms continue to bear visible traces of Roman mythological, political, and numerical systems, even when those traces are no longer consciously recognized by all speakers. This gives the French system a particularly dense historical character. The names themselves function as linguistic relics of earlier civilizational structures, and they demonstrate how language can preserve inherited temporal forms across long periods of cultural transformation. From a linguocultural point of

view, such persistence is important because it shows that temporal vocabulary may remain a repository of historical consciousness even when it functions in ordinary daily speech.

Uzbek month names present a different picture. Their official literary forms are mostly the result of adaptation to an internationally standardized calendar, and for this reason their immediate etymological motivation is often weak or inaccessible within the contemporary language. Yet this does not make them culturally empty. On the contrary, the coexistence of standardized Gregorian month names with zodiacal and Hijri lunar designations produces a rich temporal layering that may be even more revealing in linguocultural terms. The Uzbek case shows that the cultural meaning of month names does not depend only on etymological transparency. It may also arise from the interaction between several systems of nomination that remain available within the linguistic consciousness of a community.

This distinction has important implications for comparative analysis. In French, historical depth is strongly embedded in the lexical form itself. In Uzbek, historical and cultural depth is more visibly distributed across parallel naming systems. Thus, the contrast between the two languages is not one between “meaningful” and “less meaningful” systems, but one between different modes of preserving temporal culture in language.

Another important conclusion concerns the role of discourse. In both languages, literary usage demonstrates that month names are capable of generating meanings that go far beyond calendar reference. They may function as symbols of seasonal passage, emotional states, personal or collective recollection, and existential temporality. This suggests that month names should be treated not merely as lexical units belonging to the field of time reckoning, but as expressive signs whose semantic potential depends heavily on context.

The implications for translation are also noteworthy. A translator cannot always treat month names as neutral equivalents. In many cases, the temporal label in the source text may carry atmosphere, cultural association, or symbolic weight that requires interpretive sensitivity in the target language. A formally correct translation may fail to preserve the emotional or

cultural resonance activated by a month name in literary discourse. For this reason, the linguocultural analysis of month names is relevant not only to lexicology and onomastics, but also to translation studies and stylistics.

CONCLUSION

The present study has shown that month names in French and Uzbek should be understood not only as calendar labels, but also as linguocultural units in which historical memory, cultural symbolism, normative practice, and discursive meaning intersect. Their analysis demonstrates that temporal nomination is never entirely neutral: even the most familiar month name may carry traces of older belief systems, administrative standardization, symbolic reinterpretation, seasonal imagination, or poetic association.

French month names preserve especially clear links with the Roman cultural world. Through mythological, political, and numerical motivations, they retain a visible historical depth that makes them an important object for etymological and linguocultural analysis. The sequence from *septembre* to *décembre* is particularly significant because it reveals the long survival of earlier calendar structures within the modern lexicon.

Uzbek literary month names, although primarily standardized as adapted Gregorian forms, exist within a broader and more complex temporal naming system that includes zodiacal and Hijri lunar months. This layered structure shows that temporal vocabulary in Uzbek reflects not only official norm, but also folk cosmology, seasonal experience, and religious-cultural memory. Consequently, the Uzbek month-name system should be interpreted as a stratified linguocultural complex rather than as a single homogeneous list of chronological terms.

The analysis of literary discourse further confirms that month names may acquire expressive functions that far exceed denotation. In poetic and narrative contexts they may generate imagery, organize emotional atmosphere, reactivate memory, and serve as markers of symbolic or inner temporality. In this respect,

month names prove to be highly productive discursive units capable of linking temporal reference with cultural meaning.

Taken together, these findings support the conclusion that the study of month names opens an important perspective on the relationship between language, culture, and temporal consciousness. Such analysis is valuable for comparative linguistics, linguoculturology, onomastics, translation studies, and research on the norms and expressive resources of language.

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