

**Laura Jagelková**  
(née Belicajová)

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Education

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- PhD in Slavic Studies and Slavic languages**, *Jan Stanislav Institute of Slavistics at the Slovak Academy of Sciences*, Bratislava, joint with *Constantine the Philosopher University*, Nitra, Slovakia Sep. 2021 – present
- Supervisor: Peter Žeňuch
  - PhD Thesis: “Ethnolinguistic research in the Goral dialect environment”
  - Fields of specialization: Ethnolinguistics, Slavistics, Etymology, Religion, Literature, Folklore
  - Teaching: Slovak Language and Culture
- Visiting Scholar** at *Dartmouth College*, Hanover, NH Mar. 2023 – present
- Advisor: James N. Stanford
  - Classes: Introductory Linguistics, History of Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Language and Culture,
  - Participated in: the 15th Annual Dartmouth Sociolinguistics Conference, the Linguistic Research Roundtable discussion, and the Colloquium of the Department of Religion
- MA in Education**, *Comenius University*, Bratislava, Slovakia Sep. 2019 – Aug. 2021
- GPA: 4.00/4.00
  - Fields of specialization: Slovak Language and Literature, Ethics and Civic Education
  - Master’s Thesis: “The Adaptation of P. Dobšinský’s Folk Tales by M. Rúfus, P. Glocko, and O. Sliacky”
  - Diploma with honors (August 24, 2021)
- BA in Education**, *Comenius University*, Bratislava, Slovakia Sep. 2016 – June 2019
- GPA: 3.86/4.00
  - Fields of Specialization: Slovak Language and Literature, Ethics and Civic Education
  - Bachelor’s Thesis: “The Adaptation of Slovak Folk Tales by M. Ďuríčková”
  - Diploma with honors (June 10, 2019)

Awards, honors, and scholarships

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- Séjours scientifiques en France** jointly awarded by the Institut français and the French Embassy in Slovakia for research stay at the Sorbonne Centre for Linguistics in cooperation with the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales 2024
- Fulbright Schuman Fellowship** awarded by the European Fulbright Commission in Belgium (for the first time to a PhD student from Slovakia) for a nine-month research stay examining the mutual intelligibility of Slavic languages by US non-native speakers 2024
- Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD) Fellowship** for a six-month research stay at the University of Cologne examining the mutual intelligibility of Slavic languages by German non-native speakers 2024
- Ralph A. Gallagher Travel Grant** awarded by the Association for Sociology of Religion 2024
- Graduate Student Grant 2024** awarded by Association Canadienne des Slavites 2024
- Grant for a research stay in Canada** awarded by the Literary Fund of the Slovak Republic 2024
- Honorary scholarship of the Slovak Academy of Sciences** achieved as one of the best Slovak young researchers 2023
- Erasmus+ scholarship** for an academic internship at the University of Cologne, Germany 2023
- National Scholarship** (awarded to the most promising Slovak students) for a six-month study program in the USA 2022
- President’s Prize of Comenius University**: Award for the best student in the Department of Education 2021
- Erasmus+ scholarship** for an internship for a Slovak language teaching organization at Nova University, Portugal 2021
- Prize of the Department Chair of Comenius University**: Award for the one of the best bachelor’s thesis in the Department of Education (awarded for an exceptional contribution to the field) 2019
- Merit scholarship** as one of the top students with the highest GPA for all 2 years of Master’s program out of more than 400 enrolled students in the Department of Education 2021
- Merit scholarship** as one of the top students with the highest GPA for all 3 years of Bachelor’s program out of more than 1,500 enrolled students 2019
- InterStudy Scholarship** awarded to the most promising Slovak students for a summer English language school in Denmark 2016

Professional Experience

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- Lecturer** (remotely), *Slovak Academy of Sciences*, Slovakia Nov. 2023 – Jan. 2024
- Teach Slovak language to foreign PhD students and postdoctoral researchers in Slovakia
  - Prepare specific study materials focusing on vocabulary related to students’ research
  - Impart communication, presentation, and technical skills
- Lecturer and Researcher**, *University of Cologne*, Germany Oct. 2023 – Nov. 2024
- Teach Slovak to Bachelor’s and Master’s degree students at the Slavic Department
  - Research on common and distinct features of Slavic languages and culture

- Lecturer** (remotely), *Ministry of Education and Comenius University*, Bratislava, Slovakia Feb. 2021 – Aug. 2023
- Taught Slovak to foreigners preparing to pass a language test, levels A1- C1 according to CEFR
  - Developed personalized study materials adapted to students' specific needs
- Lecturer**, *Nova University*, Lisbon, Portugal Feb. 2021 – Jun. 2021
- Chosen by Comenius University for a competitive internship partnership
  - Managed the teaching program of Slovak for foreigners
  - Established a study plan for the Spring semester
  - Led language and cultural activities in collaboration with the Slovak Embassy
- Master Lecturer**, *ESET*, Bratislava, Slovakia Jan. 2020 – Jan. 2021
- Created a novel methodology for teaching the Slovak language to 13 foreign employees of an international IT company based in Slovakia
  - Supervised the team of Slovak language teachers at the company
- Language School Teacher**, *Prima*, Bratislava, Slovakia Sep. 2016 – June 2020
- Organized experience-based English and German language study for children aged 3 to 12

## Participation in Research Grants

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- Law. Language. Educational Compendia: Legal and Narrative Texts in Bulgarian and Slovak Culture* Jan. 2023 – present
- Program: Mobility. International Scientific Cooperation
  - Principal Investigator: Prof. PhDr. Žeňuch Peter DrSc.
- Preparation and publication of a handwritten book of sermons and the Holy Scriptures interpretations from the 18th century* Jan. 2020 – Dec. 2023
- Program: VEGA
  - Principal Investigator: Mgr. Šašerina Svetlana PhD.

## Conference Presentations

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- International Congress of Slavists* (Paris, accepted for 2025)
- Annual Meeting of Association for the Sociology of Religion* (Montreal, 2024)
- 2024 CAS Congress (Canadian Association of Slavists)* (Montreal, 2024)
- Kolloquium Slavische Sprachwissenschaft* (2023, Cologne)
- Slovak Studies in Contexts: Tradition and Perspectives* (Belgrade, 2023)
- Interdisciplinary Research of Sources on Language and Spiritual Culture* (Bratislava, 2022)
- 30. Kolokvium mladých jazykovedcov* (Bratislava, 2021)

## Languages

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Fluent in *Slovak, Polish, Czech, English*; intermediate in *German*; basic in *French, Russian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian*

## Publications

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Jagelková, L. (2023). O smerovaní etnolingvistiky a axiológie: Ján Doruľa a výskum duchovnej kultúry na Slovensku [**The orientation of ethnolinguistics and axiology: Ján Doruľa and Research on Spiritual Culture in Slovakia**]. *Slavica Slovaca*, 58(2), pp. 280–288.

This paper discusses the formation of ethnolinguistic and axiological research, the direction of which was set by Ján Doruľa. By systematically investigating the relationship between language and culture, the Jan Stanislav Institute of Slavic Studies confirms that language is an integral part of everyday culture. At the same time, language is a tool for learning about individual and collective mentality, because its usage is deeply rooted in the consciousness of a particular community. Using culturally characteristic linguistic expressions, diverse interpretations of the image of the world are created, which are synergistically and syncretically combined in the Slavic and wider European context.

Belicajová, L. (2023). Etnolingvistický výskum na slovensko-poľskom pohraničí [**Ethnolinguistic research on the Slovak-Polish border area**]. In: *Словакистика у Контексту: Традиција и Перспективе*. Ива Драшкић Вићановић et al (Eds.), Belgrade: University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology, pp. 9–10.

This paper demonstrates what an ethnolinguistic approach can reveal about a nation. Employing the lexical comparative method, I provide an answer to the question: Why did the people living on the Slovak-Polish border territory in the area of present-day Slovak Orava perceive themselves as Slovaks? The Polish-Slovak border region Orava is characterized by the Goral dialect, which is genetically based on the Polish language. Nevertheless, people living in the territory of the Orava region declared their nationality as Slovak in a census over a hundred years ago. Ethnolinguistic research, conducted on folk narratives from this territory, clarifies that different perceptions of the world, from the way Poles perceive it, could have led the inhabitants to consider their nationality as Slovak, despite adverse circumstances. These perceptions, characterized by a specific linguistic image of the world related to Slovak culture, reflect the environment in which Slovaks live: their

environment, everyday life, traditions, history, beliefs, symbolism, values, and what is socially expected. The ensemble of unique material and spiritual elements of the Orava society is visible in the Goral dialect. The latter is still spoken by the people in the territory of present-day Slovak Orava. It is identical in certain isoglosses to the Slovak language and different from the Polish language, which may indicate not only linguistic but also cultural differences. These differences likely contributed to the formation of a distinct national identity of Slovaks. The results of this research could contribute to the creation of a Slovak ethnolinguistic dictionary in the future.

Belicajová, L. (2022). O čom rozprávajú slovenské rozprávky (Adaptácie ľudových rozprávok a kultúrohistorická hodnota v nich) [**What Do Slovak Folktales Tell Us? (Adaptations of Folk Tales and Their Cultural-Historical Value)**]. In: *VARIA XXX*. K. Gajdošová, & N. Kolenčíková (Eds.), Slovenská jazykovedná spoločnosť pri Jazykovednom ústave Ľ. Štúra SAV, pp. 57–66.

Slovak folktales are more than just a part of cultural heritage. They are a source of information on the linguistic and historical development of the Slovak nation. We can see this when comparing the language used in older collections of folktales with their recent adaptations in modern Slovak. In his original collection of folktales, P. Dobšinský preserved many elements originating from local dialects which were an integral part of traditional storytelling. Today many such words have become archaic while others changed meaning during the process of the historical development of the Slovak language. I compare the texts of folktales from *Prostonárodné slovenské povesti* by P. Dobšinský adaptations of these folktales by authors of modern Slovak literature for children and the youth (M. Rúfus, M. Ďuričková, P. Glocko, O. Sliacky). I identify changes on multiple linguistic levels and classify them into phonetic, morphological, syntactic, lexical, and motivational-thematic categories. The main purpose of these modifications is to update the original language to make it more comprehensible to the modern reader. However, some modifications also involve transforming a story for adults into children's literature or are related to the ideology of the then dominant communist political regime. Based on historical, cultural, linguistic, and literary analysis, I offer a complex evaluation of the observed alterations. The authors of the adaptations sometimes corrode the cultural and historical value of Slovak folktales when trying to make them more palatable to the child reader. Modern Slovak society needs to find strength in its historical roots which is why contemporary authors should incorporate state of the art research findings and pay careful attention to the overall context of the Slovak folktale in their adaptations.

Belicajová, L. (2022). Mytologicko-kresťanská symbolika rastlín počas slávenia sviatkov [**Mythological-Christian Symbolism of Plants during the Celebration of Holidays**]. In: *Interdisciplinárny výskum prameňov o jazyku a duchovnej kultúre: Slovensko-slovanské súvislosti*. S. Šašerina, P. Žeňuch, & M. Hríbová (Eds.), Bratislava: Slavistický ústav Jána Stanislava SAV, Slovenský komitét slavistov, pp. 59–65.

The basis of Slavic folk culture was formed by established mythological ideas. Various areas of this ethno-cultural space were influenced by the Christian tradition, although it entered the area under investigation as a foreign element in a later period. Slovak folk Catholicism was formed at the intersection of a less rigid, more open Slavic mythology and an organized, codified Catholic system. Holidays celebrated to this day are one of the areas where the mutual influence of the two cultural models through folk Catholicism is most clearly manifested. An important part of the celebration of individual holidays are plants, each of which carries a symbol with a different meaning. This fact is evident from several folk narratives; therefore, the analysis of folklore narratives forms a significant part of our work. Our research, the subject of which are the symbolic elements of the plant kingdom, important for the celebration of holidays, allows us to define the main axiological frameworks that influenced the creation of the culture of the Slovak national community.

Belicajová, L. (2021). Mariánska úcta ako jeden z prejavov kultúry slovenského národa [**Marian Veneration as one of the Manifestations of the Culture of the Slovak Nation**]. *Slavica Slovaca*, 56(3), pp. 475–478.

Marian veneration, naturally established with the arrival of Christianity, is an important source of knowledge of spiritual but also national, and cultural identity. Religion cannot be understood without its historical, national, or cultural context. I analyze information from *Bohorodička v kultúrnych dejinách Slovenska* regarding Marian veneration in Slovakia from a historical, literary, and ethnolinguistic perspective. The enduring Marian veneration in Slovakia results from faith in the Holy Virgin, a traditional symbol of perpetual protection. This can be seen in her visual depictions. Stories about supernatural events related to the life of the Virgin Mary have been preserved in written form and through oral tradition. Together with Marian celebrations, shrines, and pilgrimages, they reinvigorate folk religiosity and the nation's spiritual and cultural values. A typical sign of Marian religiosity and tradition in Slovakia is the motive embodied by "Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows". The "tearful" icon from Klokočov shows that Christian faith and Marian veneration are a deeply rooted and precious heritage of the Slovak nation, both in Slovakia and in the Slovak diaspora abroad.

## Popular Science Articles

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Jagelková (Belicajová), L. (2023). Slovenská rozprávka rozpráva [**Slovak Fairy Tale Tells**]. *Quark*, 28(3), p. 40.

The term fairy tale is most often associated with children's literature. Many people may not know that the first Slovak fairy tales were told at a time when children were already asleep, and their content was often not suitable for children. The original folk tales were not just a source of supernatural characters and magic. Instead, they contained the beliefs, culture, history, traditions, and way of thinking of our ancestors. Several folklore collectors became particularly interested in these stories at a time when Slovakia's independence was in question.

Jagelková, L. (2024). **Lived Religion in Slavic Countries: Symbolism of the Trees.** *Canadian Slavonic Papers.*

The interaction between Christianity and the archaic Slavic faith over the past thousand years has created a lived religion that reflects their reciprocal influence. I demonstrate the gradual development of this lived religion in Slavic countries through a unique interdisciplinary analysis of history, folklore, contemporary customs, and language. This method enable a comprehensive understanding of lived religion and is generally applicable in non-Slavic contexts as well. I focus on the symbolism of the tree, a key element in both Christianity and the archaic faith. Particular trees were associated with specific miraculous powers which became attributed to saints under the influence of Christianity, as manifested in present-day traditions, phrases, names, and toponyms in Slavic countries. My findings suggest, among other things, that the gender of trees in present Slavic languages can be traced back to the gender of ancient Slavic deities associated with those trees. More generally, I show how elements of archaic Slavic faith, which are not always commonly legible, have been preserved in the Slavic lived religion.

## Volunteer Activities

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**Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV): *The Speakafé***

Nov. 2023 – present

- Organize monthly meetings to assist PhD students from Slovakia and from abroad to respectively develop their English and Slovak language skills
- Lead discussions based on receptive multilingualism between Slovak and international students

**SAIA, n. o.** (an NGO which *helps the internationalization of education and science in Slovakia*)

Sep. 2023 – Sep. 2024

- Advise disadvantaged Slovak students on their applications to obtain scholarships at universities abroad via monthly online webinars
- Prepare an annual brochure to encourage Slovak students to study abroad

**Center for Continuing Education at Comenius University in Bratislava**

Mar. 2022 – Aug. 2022

- Taught the Slovak language to Ukrainian refugees twice a week to improve their integration into personal and professional life in Slovakia
- Helped them find accommodation, work, and access to government benefits

**SVD** (Societas Verbi Divini)

Jul. 2019 – Aug. 2019

- Taught the basics of English to poor children from the lowest caste six times a week in a church school in Mumbai, India

**Magis+** (a volunteer youth organization that aims to *help people in need*, such as the homeless, prisoners, refugees, etc.)

Jan. 2019 – Feb 2019

- Socialized with child and teenage prisoners in Panama and helped them improve their physical environment
- Assisted in their preparation for community life after their time in prison

**Pre Mišku** (association *supporting a girl suffering from cerebral palsy, scoliosis, epilepsy, etc.*)

Nov. 2017 – Sep. 2022

- Conducted individual weekly meetings to teach English to a girl with disabilities; as English songs and cartoons were enjoyable for her, they were key to her physical and mental well-being
- Prepared special teaching materials and activities aimed at improving her physical mobility
- Promoted this organization to find additional support for the girl whose healthcare costs are barely covered by insurance

**The eRko Summer camp and Dobrá novina** (a Christmas caroling event, organized every year *to support humanitarian and development projects in sub-Saharan Africa*)

Sep. 2010 – Dec. 2015

- Organized a two-week summer camp for poor children and a three-month preparation for the children's caroling event
- Met with children weekly and managed socialization activities, including teamwork-building and raising awareness of the importance of fundraising for children living in Africa