We propose a formal HPSG analysis of periphrastic conjugation in Czech at the morphology-syntax interface. In the past 1st and 2nd person, the past is realized periphrastically by a combination of the main verb, in what is historically an *l*-participle, and what is historically a 2nd position clitic homophonous with matching forms of the copula. In the 3rd person, the main verb occurs on its own.

Tseng and Kupść (2006) address this situation by taking past auxiliaries to be phrasal agreement suffixes, but this is invalidated empirically by the evidence presented by Hana (2007, chap. 4) that Czech clitics are words. The alternative of postulating an empty auxiliary is conceptually unsatisfactory. We propose a new analysis building on the recent literature on periphrastic inflection and morphosyntactic mismatches (Sadler and Spencer, 2001; Ackerman and Stump, 2004; Bonami, 2015). We posit that in the Czech past, two different mismatches occur: the non-3rd person involves mismatches on the main verb, whereas the 3rd person involves a mismatch on the auxiliary, whereas the 3rd person involves a mismatch on the main verb. As a result, the expression of the past always involves a morphosyntactic mismatch, although it does not always involve periphrasis.

References:  