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Postsyntactic morphology and the syntax of verb clusters.

The analysis of verb clusters in languages like German and Dutch is often informed by a perceived absence of tense in the nonfinite component of the verb cluster. This leads to an analysis in which the nonfinite part is no larger than VP, and often even just V. However it can be shown that the nonfinite part may express tense independently from the tense of the embedding clause, and that when tense is not expressed it is not so much absent as dependent on the tense of the embedding clause, leading to unmarked tense morphology. Tense in infinitives in languages like Dutch and German is expressed periphrastically, and we argue that such periphrastic expressions occupy cells in inflectional paradigms just like synthetic forms. This leads to a considerable simplification in the analysis and description of verb clusters, and to a reassessment of the differences between German and Dutch in this domain, reducing perceived differences in restructuring properties to morphological idiosyncrasies rather than to differences in syntactic structure.