Atle Groenn’s book deals with Russian aspectology, in particular with Imperfective (Ipf) forms with factual meaning. Aspectology is one of the most controversial areas in Slavic linguistics and the factual Ipf, though much discussed, is still poorly understood. The author has set an ambitious goal – to combine the data concerning the Russian factual Ipf with the methods of formal semantics, such as Hans Kamp’s Discourse Representation Theory. As a result, we have a fundamental piece of research, which is of great use both for specialists in the compositional semantics of aspect and for those who are interested in the grammatical side of the question.

There are two main problems with the factual Ipf in Russian.

The first problem is how to differentiate semantically the factual Ipf from the Perfective (Pf). In other words, what is the reason that makes the speaker say, for example, 

Анямыла (Ipf) пол, instead of Анявымыла (Pf) пол.

The second problem is how to unite the factual meaning of the Ipf with its other meanings, such as the Progressive and Habitualis.

Both problems are challenging, and the scientific narrative of the book develops as a detective story. As is often the case, not all of the expectations are fully realized, but the attentive reader will undoubtedly be rewarded for his/her labour.

It is generally accepted that the aspectual forms of a Russian verb possess a variety of particular meanings – presumably engendered or at least motivated by the context. It would have been impossible to embrace all of them at one go, and the author ingeniously limited his task. A contemporary approach distinguishes two kinds of context for aspectual forms: lexical context – on the one hand, and the context of utterance, which creates the so called view point aspect, – on the other. It is this second kind of aspect that is the main object of analysis in Groenn’s work. In fact, lexical problems connected with aspect are reduced to a minimum: only telic verbs are taken into consideration. So many issues connected, for example, with stative or momentary verbs are put aside, and what we have is a very natural class of occurrences when the meaning of the Ipf includes the resultative component (e. g., подвозил implicates подвез); these Ipfs are called factual.

Chapter 1 is devoted to telicity. In fact, it is rightly claimed that the factual meaning appears only in the context of telic verbs. But what is telicity? Ordinary syntactic tests for (a)telicity are examined, i. e. co-occurrence with за (Engl. in) and в течение (Engl. for):
In Russian these tests do not yield any classification of verbs, because one and the same verb has different combinability in different aspects – for example, the same читать in the Ipf, as in (9), behaves like играть:

(9) Ваня читал [Ipf] книгу *за два часа / в течение двух часов.

Atelicity is grounded in the lexical semantics of a verb. Such verbs as висеть or искать are atelic – and they will never acquire the factual (i.e. the resultative) meaning. On the other hand, telicity may be context dependent: пересекать <канал>, as a verb of movement, is always telic, because пересекать, has no absolutive use; but читать may be both telic and atelic. I should say that in the Russian tradition telicity is conceived as a property of a lexeme and not of a perfective verb; пересекать, for example, is a verb of action; it is telic, and it has two forms, one of them presents the action as an event, the other – as a process, but the verb is said to be telic in both uses.

The compositional telicity of читать is seen in examples (a)–(c):

(a) читать – activity, atelic;
(b) читать книгу – action, telic;
(c) читать книги <indefinite books> – activity, atelic.

The term telic, in the Western tradition, embraces both verbs of accomplishment (such as купить – покупать) and momentary verbs (such as проиграть – проигрывать). But these verbs behave differently with respect to factuality:

(a) Кто в прошлый раз покупал билеты, Ваня? – (b) *Кто в прошлый раз проигрывал, Ваня?

This is why the term telic should not be translated into Russian as предельный. For translation I would rather use its synonym bounded, which can be rendered in Russian as терминативный.

Thus, only those verbs may hope to get the meaning of the factual Ipf that enter an aspectual pair (it has not been examined whether such statives as понимать may acquire the factual meaning).

Later on in Chapter 1 the author enumerates the properties of the factual Ipf:

– reference to complete events;
– telic predicates;
– singularity of event;
– location in the past.