



1.2.1. Vowels

Long vowels are marked by a dash over the vowel: ā, ō, ū.⁴⁶ They often occur as the result of the elision of a consonant from between two vowels, as for instance in Bardi gōl 'father', corresponding to Nyulnyul bobol 'father'; Bardi bāl 'paperbark', corresponding to Nyulnyul bagal 'paperbark'; and Bardi and Nimanburru gā 'toothache', corresponding to Nyikina and Yawuru gogo 'toothache'.⁴⁷ We adopted the use of a macron over the vowel (for instance ā) to indicate the length of the sound in preference to the colon which tends to destroy the word-picture and is rather disturbing to the eye.

The signs for short vowels – ä, ë, ö, and ü – have been used only for those markedly so, as in for instance bēlangad, from English *blanket*. The natives are not accustomed to pronounce bl without a vowel between b and l; therefore they insert a short ë between the two consonants and assign stress in this case to the second syllable.⁴⁸ [Stress in most Aboriginal languages falls regularly on the first syllable of a word – see p. 67.]

The following is a brief discussion of the main phonetic properties of the vowels.

Fig. 5: A sample section from the original microfilm and edited book.

of partly structured and incomplete lists, and extraction of most examples from the running text, and presentation in the more standard form of numbered examples made up of a language line, a line of interlinear glosses, followed by a free translation (see below for examples). As to wording, changes were made to adjust it to standard idiomatic English, though the original terms such as *native*, *primitive*, and *pygmoid* were retained to reflect the terminology of the times, despite their pejorative overtones in modern speech. In a few places more precise wording was adopted to forestall misunderstandings. Fig. 5 shows a small sample comparing the original text with the edited text.

Ultimately these editorial decisions are subjective, and at times I doubtless interfered more than necessary in the interests of producing a comprehensible piece of writing. It is also difficult to maintain editorial consistency in a task spanning

a decade or more. I have felt "some guilt at interfering with the work of an author who is dead" (as Isobel White says in her introduction to Bates 1985: 30). The only possible rejoinder to this is the hope that the end justifies the means.

The dictionaries, Parts II, III, and IV, are published only on CD-ROM. This was for both economic and practical reasons: to publish the entire work in hard copy would have been prohibitively expensive (the book already comes with the fairly hefty price tag of € 198). Aside from this, it was considered that the electronic format of the dictionaries would provide better possibilities of access to the contents than would the paper copy, e.g., via search functions. It also permits some flexibility in the display of data.

The three dictionary files are each presented in two formats, a text file that can be viewed with the widely used SIL International program Toolbox (freely available from their website, <<http://www.sil.org>>