Linguistics 301

HOMEWORKS #2 c3 #5: CONCRETE EXAMPLES OF LANGUAGE CHANGE

Below are three versions of the same text, the Lord's Prayer, from different stages in the history of English. Your assignment is as follows:

1. Go through the versions carefully, comparing each one with the one immediately after it (i.e. (a) with (b), (b) with (c)).
2. Take careful note of those linguistic elements that are different in each of the comparisons you make. Be sure that you focus only on real differences in the language and linguistic system, not just differences that are the result of a choice of alternate words or phrasing for the expression of the same ideas.
3. For each comparison you make (i.e. (a) with (b) and (b) with (c)), list at least 5 linguistic differences that you find.
4. State the component or level of the linguistic system (i.e. phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, or lexicon) that is involved in each change you list. Aim for changes from as many of these components/levels as you can.

NOTE: In the Old English version, a colon (:) after a vowel indicates that the vowel is pronounced long. The symbol æ stands for a vowel sound like the a of bat. All other letters can be taken at face value, with each vowel being sounded out (there are no "silent letters"). Similarly, for the Middle English version, the letters can be given roughly their modern value, again, though, with each letter (especially the vowels) being sounded out. In the Old English version, you may not be able to figure out what each word stands for, so concentrate on what you feel you can identify accurately.

a. Old English (995 AD)

b. Middle English (1389 AD)
   Ure fader that art in hevenes, halwid be thy name. Thy kingdom comme to; be thy wille don as in heven and in erthe. Giv to us this day ure breed. And forgeve to us ure dettis, as we forgeve to ure dettours. And lede us not into temptacioun, but delivere us fro evil.

c. Early Modern English (1611AD)  [essentially modern spellings and pronunciation]
Our father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.