Writing an

Analytical Commentary in English Language

* 500-600 words
* 4 paragraphs
* Refer to at least 2 subsystems

**What to take into consideration:**

-mode: consider features of spoken text OR features of written text

-audience: POA /interlocutors’ backgrounds (ethnolect/Aboriginal English)

-function: seeking information/recording facts/entertainment etc.

-context: the situation or circumstances surrounding the text

-lexicon/register: slang, jargon, euphemisms, dysphemisms, taboo language, politically correct language, double speak, figurative language, literary devices, discourse markers/particles, intensifiers, latinates, variety of English used,

-syntax: sentence types, sentence structure, ellipsis

-discourse: cooperative principles, cohesion and coherence

-semantics: denotation/connotation, semantic properties

-pragmatics: apologies / complaints / requests / “negative politeness”

All of the above will influence the formality/informality of the text and will allow you to make a statement in your analysis which can be backed up with concrete evidence from the text (e.g. what does the language tell us about the participants’ identities? / the language is mostly informal due to…)

**and....**

* Make a list of the Features you find in the text, then group them according to their subsystems (e.g. turn-taking = discourse, slang = lexicology, exclamative sentences = syntax)
* Don't confuse sub systems with features
* Never mind which feature you mention - always explain its effect/purpose
* If the text is spoken, topic management, conversational strategies and prosodic features have to be discussed as they are unique to spoken texts
* Make a second list of features you have 'up your sleeve' (e.g. ambiguity, coherence, inference, jargon, etc.) and see if you can find examples in the text
* You don't have to mention the sub systems you are investigating but you should have a structure (paragraphs!) which focuses on one sub system, followed by a discussion of another sub system (i.e. do not discuss different subsystems in one paragraph)
* Make sure you link the paragraphs (e.g. 'Another indication of the informal nature of this text is the frequent use of...')
* The continuum of formality should be mentioned but it should not be the only thing you concentrate on - the most important thing to keep in mind is the function of the text - e.g. if the main function of the text is to inform which features support this function?
* You can mention the principle of appropriateness in your summary; don't do it right at the start
* Remember that the principle of appropriateness is closely linked to the situational and cultural context - what is acceptable in one culture and/or context might be completely unacceptable in another (e.g. when you state that the POA is adhered to, explain why)
* Don't go into too much detail when pointing out features (e.g. explaining a pun should be done in a sentence not a whole paragraph)
* Avoid repetition - an analytical commentary should have a final statement which sums up your findings but it is not meant to have a summary which repeats everything you already said
* Think carefully about the audience of written texts in particular - readers of 'The Age' might be more likely of a higher socio-economic status but that does not mean they don't want to be entertained
* Don't use phrases like 'it can be assumed', or 'it is likely that...' - you are analysing a text and supporting your analysis with cold, hard facts

**How to structure your commentary**

The **introduction** orients the reader to the writer’s purpose and focus as well as indicates something about what the reader can expect to find in the remainder of the essay. Most introductions contain a thesis statement which communicates the point the writer intends to make – although some writers may choose to let the reader infer what their thesis is or to include it at the end of the composition rather than at the beginning.

* Discuss mode
* Discuss interlocutors/audience
* Discuss context (situational, e.g. function as well as cultural, e.g. beliefs)
* Where does the text sit on a continuum of formality (contention)

In the **main body**, the writer explores and develops the controlling idea or ideas presented in the introduction point by point by providing examples, details, and facts, by giving reasons, and by relating incidents.

* Explore language features which support your contention; always refer back to function of the text

The **conclusion** reminds the reader of the essay’s main point by summarizing, coming full circle, exploring the significance of something, asking a question, offering new insights, etc.