

A biographical study of social deixis of address terms toward Diana in *Spencer* (2021)

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Abstract

This study explores the use of social deixis through address terms directed toward Diana in the biographical film *Spencer* (2021). As a pragmatic phenomenon, social deixis reflects hierarchical relations, politeness strategies, and identity negotiation within discourse. Employing a qualitative-biographical approach, the research analyzes utterances from the film's script, classified according to Levinson's (1983) framework of absolute and relational social deixis. The findings reveal that address terms function systematically across four categories: differentiating social levels, maintaining politeness, signaling social identity, and enhancing sentence effectiveness. These linguistic markers demonstrate how institutional authority is reinforced through honorifics such as Your Royal Highness and Ma'am, while intimate terms like Mummy highlight Diana's identity. From a biographical lens, the study shows that language becomes a site of tension between Diana's institutional role and personal self. The research contributes to pragmatic studies by illustrating how address terms reproduce power relations and fragment identity within monarchical discourse.

Keywords: *Address terms; Lady Diana; social deixis; qualitative-biographical approach*

Introduction

Pragmatics serves as a branch of linguistics dedicated to examining language meaning within its functional use. This field primarily investigates how formal linguistic structures, such as grammar, operate within the practicalities of communication to achieve specific objectives. Essentially, pragmatics highlight the dynamic interplay between linguistic forms and the socio-contextual frameworks of interaction (Nirwan et al., 2023).

A fundamental concept within pragmatics is deixis, referring to linguistic elements whose meanings are inherently dependent on the situational context of an utterance. Beyond spatial and temporal dimensions, deixis encompasses social aspects that signify status, roles, and social distance between participants. Consequently, the study of deixis is vital for understanding how language serves as a tool for representing complex social structures (Levinson, 1983).

Levinson (1983) posits that social deixis concerns linguistic forms that mark the social

relationship between a speaker and an addressee, particularly regarding hierarchy and institutional position. These markers often dictate linguistic politeness, reflecting the societal distinctions prevalent among interlocutors during an interaction. A prominent realization of social deixis is found in address terms, which not only identify the addressee but also implicitly convey the speaker's attitude, respect, and social standing.

Deixis has been widely explored in recent literature, particularly regarding its social and narrative functions. (Ginting et al., 2022) identified four primary roles for social deixis in the novel "*Gadis Pesisir*" differentiating social levels, maintaining politeness, improving sentence effectiveness, and establishing social identity. The other research examined these functions in the film *Avengers*, noting that deictic elements help establish character hierarchies, strengthen emotional bonds, and signal group membership (Jundi Mukhtaruddin et al., 2024). Expanding on this narrative role, (Dakhi, 2025) found that in the film "*Sejuta Sayang Untuknya*," deictic expressions are central to building characterization, defining

relationships, and grounding the story's temporal nuances.

While research on social deixis and address terms has been extensively conducted in contexts such as education, the workplace, and political discourse, most existing studies adopt a macro-perspective on general collective interaction. Scholarly inquiries that specifically trace the variations of address terms directed toward a single individual within complex social relations particularly through a biographical lens remain relatively scarce. This gap necessitates a more focused investigation into how social deixis systematically constructs the identity and social position of a specific figure across various interactive scenarios.

The film *Spencer* (2021) provides a pertinent context for such an inquiry, as it portrays Diana as the epicenter of interaction within the highly hierarchical British monarchy. Throughout the narrative, Diana receives a diverse array of address terms from various speakers, including royal family members, domestic staff, and security personnel. These variations reflect a spectrum of social relations, ranging from rigid institutional formalities to intimate personal connections. Thus, the film serves as a rich linguistic corpus for analyzing the practical application of social deixis through address terms directed at a singular target.

Social class is traditionally defined by shared socioeconomic factors and specific hierarchical positions, such as the working or lower classes Revillard, as cited in (Hendra Pramudya, 2022). These structures are reinforced by social norms and cultural alignment, driven by what (Spears, 2021) identifies as social interdependence and normative pressure. Princess Diana serves as a prominent example of an individual navigating and ultimately transcending these dynamics (Mangolo, 2020). Despite a social identity rooted in a rigid royal hierarchy, she bypassed traditional protocols to engage directly with the public. Through these sincere gestures, she dissolved the conventional barriers of her class, shifting her identity from a remote British royal to a universal symbol of philanthropy.

The research corpus comprises specific utterances from *Spencer* (2021) that feature address

terms targeted toward Diana. The scope is delimited to forms of address that explicitly represent the social relationship between the speaker and the protagonist, avoiding purely cinematic or psychological interpretations. Analysis is conducted by classifying these social deictic markers based on Levinson's (1983) framework, specifically the distinction between absolute and relational social deixis (Fathonah, 2020). This methodological focus to ensure the study maintains a consistent and rigorous grounding within the field of linguistic pragmatics.

Building upon this context, the study addresses what types of social deixis are realized through address terms directed toward Diana and how these terms represent the underlying social relations. The primary objective is to identify and analyze these deictic markers to reveal the complexities of the protagonist's social standing within the film. Ultimately, this research argues that address terms are never neutral. Rather, they function as linguistic instruments that reflect the intricate structures of social hierarchy and power dynamics within an individual's life.

Methods

Through a qualitative approach, this study examines the use of social deixis within the film "*Spencer*." It employs a biographical-qualitative method that entails more than just gathering data, requiring the synthesis of facts to create a representative portrayal of the subject within their historical context (Creswell John W & Creswell J. David, 2023).

The primary data for this research consists of the film's script, which offers a stable basis for linguistic inquiry. Specifically, the study explores the honorifics directed at Diana, Princess of Wales, to evaluate how social deixis functioned within that historical context.

According to the (Levinson, 1983) framework, social deixis involves the linguistic marking of social relationships and relative status between participants, such as the speaker and the addressee. This is systematically expressed through honorifics, pronouns, vocatives, or titles of address that reflect social rank and hierarchy.

In analyzing the data, this study follows several steps: identifying honorific expressions in the script, categorizing them based on Levinson's social deixis framework, and interpreting the social distance they represent. To ensure the validity of the findings, data triangulation is applied by cross-referencing the script with the visual context of the film scenes to ensure an accurate interpretation of the social dynamics portrayed.

Findings and discussion

The application of social deixis is fundamental to understanding the discourse surrounding Princess Diana, particularly in relation to her shifting position within the British monarchy. The analysis of deictic markers demonstrates that language in Spencer (2021) functions not merely as a communicative tool, but as a social instrument that regulates power relations and social distance between Diana and those around her. Within the rigidly hierarchical structure of the monarchy, address terms serve as primary indicators of institutional authority while simultaneously restricting Diana's personal agency. In line with Levinson's (1983) framework, social deixis in the film reflects fixed and institutionalized social relationships rather than egalitarian interpersonal interaction.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that address terms directed toward Diana operate as linguistic mechanisms through which the tension between royal tradition and public intimacy is continuously negotiated. On the one hand, Diana is positioned as a symbolic representative of the monarchy who must adhere to strict linguistic and behavioral protocols. On the other hand, she is subject to public expectations that construct her as a warm, emotionally accessible figure. This tension is consistently manifested in the forms of address used by surrounding characters, which tend to preserve symbolic distance even in ostensibly personal situations. Consequently, social deixis in Spencer illustrates how language becomes a site of identity negotiation between Diana's institutional role and her lived personal experience (Hanifa et al., 2023).

Table 1. The function of social deixis focused on biographical analysis

Social Deixis Function	Biographical Analysis Focus in Spencer
Social Level Differentiator	Highlights the absolute power of the monarchical system over Diana's autonomy.
Maintaining Politeness	Displays "forced" decorum; polite language that masks deep internal emotional conflict.
Social Identity Differentiator	Reveals the fragmentation between "Diana the Human" and "Diana the Icon."
Sentence Effectiveness	Demonstrates the cold efficiency of protocols that leave no room for Diana's personal expression.

(Source: primary data)

The data in this study consist of social deictic expressions extracted from the dialogues of Spencer (2021) and analyzed qualitatively through a pragmatic approach. Based on the analysis, the address terms directed toward Diana can be classified into four primary functional categories: maintaining linguistic politeness, differentiating social levels, signaling social identity, and enhancing sentence effectiveness. This classification indicates that the use of social deixis in the film is not arbitrary but follows systematic and recurring functional patterns. These patterns support Levinson's (1983) argument that social deixis serves as a linguistic reflection of hierarchical structures and institutional roles within society.

Moreover, these four functional categories demonstrate that address terms are never neutral linguistic forms but carry ideological weight that reproduces power relations within Diana's life. Through specific choices of address, speakers implicitly reinforce the dominance of institutional authority over individual autonomy, even in interactions that appear personal or intimate. From a biographical perspective, this pattern reveals how

language contributes to the fragmentation of Diana’s identity as a human being, a mother, and a royal figure. Therefore, the analysis of social deixis in Spencer not only uncovers linguistic functions but also exposes the broader social and psychological consequences of institutionalized language practices within a rigid monarchical system.

Social Level Differentiator

Social deixis serves as a linguistic marker of hierarchy, allowing speakers to identify and respect the differing social positions of participants. In formal and institutional settings, specific language choices are typically employed to reflect and reinforce these gaps in status or rank (Nuryusticia & Nurrachman, 2021). Within royal discourse these linguistic norms are not optional but institutionalized, compelling speakers to adhere to fixed address conventions that reflect established social order. From a pragmatic perspective, this illustrates how address terms operate as conventionalized markers of social hierarchy rather than as expressions of interpersonal familiarity or affective closeness.

When indicating a recipient’s social standing, speakers employ social deictics such as titles of honor. In the royal family, for instance, “Your Highness” is typically reserved for direct, respectful address to high-ranking members. In contrast, “Princess of Wales” is used to define an individual’s formal position or office. Both expressions function as deictic markers that signal the speaker’s recognition of the institutional hierarchy (D. Saffah & Hameed Al-Hindawi, 2021). These address terms exemplify what Levinson (1983) categorizes as absolute social deixis, as their usage remains fixed regardless of situational familiarity or relational intimacy.

As shown in Table 1, the honorific address term “Your Royal Highness” is consistently employed by speakers occupying subordinate roles, including servants, chefs, police officers, and dressers. The consistent use of this title across varied contexts illustrates what Levinson (1983) defines as absolute social deixis whereby social rank is encoded through fixed linguistic forms regardless of

interpersonal familiarity. Pragmatically, this address term indexes hierarchical distance and reinforces institutional authority, positioning Diana as a figure defined primarily by her royal status rather than by personal identity.

Table 2. Honorific address terms “Your Royal Highness” in Spencer

No.	Speaker	Utterance
1	Head Chef	“Sorry, I mean... your royal highness.”
2	Male Servant	“gary, Your royal highness?”
3	Servant	“Your royal highness, the family are all gathered...”
4	Female Servant	“Very beautiful, your royal highness”
5	Police	“Your Royal Highness, I apologies”
6	Dresser	“Your dresser, Your Royal Highness”
7	Male Servant	“Your Royal Highness, do you want me to intervene here?”

(Source: primary data)

From a pragmatic interactional perspective, such address practices reflect speakers’ awareness of socially sanctioned norms governing appropriate forms of address. As noted by Spencer-Oatey (2007), institutional settings prioritize role obligations over interpersonal rapport, limiting the range of acceptable linguistic choices available to speakers. The obligatory use of “Your Royal Highness” therefore restricts address variability and maintains consistent interactional distance.

Social level differentiation in Spencer is not limited to direct address but also extends to referential practices in third-person contexts. Speakers frequently refer to Diana using the institutional title “The Princess of Wales” rather

than her personal name. This referential choice pragmatically foregrounds her official role within the monarchy, treating her as a role-bearer rather than an individual participant in interaction. Such patterns indicate that social deixis operates across both address and reference, shaping how participants are positioned within interaction (Cutting, 2015).

The data in Table 2 further demonstrate how referential deixis operates through the title “Princess of Wales.” This choice foregrounds Diana’s institutional role rather than her personal identity. A salient example occurs when the Head Chef self-repairs from “Diana” to “Your Royal Highness,” reflecting pragmatic awareness of address norms. Such repairs highlight how institutional conventions override personal familiarity, reinforcing Spencer-Oatey’s (2007) view that role obligations dominate over interpersonal rapport.

Table 3. Referential deixis through “Princess of Wales”

No.	Speaker	Utterance
1	Head Chef	“I want our Princess of Wales to want something”
2	Male Servant	“Sir, the princess of Wales has gone outside”
3	Equerry	“If princess wants to go home, who are we to stand...”

(Source: primary data)

From a biographical perspective, these address practices reveal how Diana’s individuality was consistently overshadowed by her institutional identity. The obligatory use of titles restricted variability in address, positioning her as a symbolic figure rather than a human participant in interaction. This fragmentation between ‘Diana the Human’ and ‘Diana the Icon’ foreshadows the tension explored in subsequent categories of social deixis.

Maintaining Politeness

Politeness in pragmatics is understood as a linguistic strategy to maintain harmony in interaction and to mitigate potential threats to the interlocutor’s face. In Spencer (2021), the honorific Ma’am appears 38 times, employed by servants, chefs, police officers, and equeries. Its repeated use demonstrates that politeness is not merely an individual choice but an institutional protocol embedded within the monarchy. Thus, Ma’am functions as a social deictic marker that signals hierarchy while simultaneously maintaining interactional distance (Levinson, 1983). This finding resonates with (Aghnia Salema, 2025), who showed that social deixis in Joe Biden’s inauguration speech similarly operated as a politeness strategy to uphold institutional respect while regulating interactional distance.

Table 3 below presents the distribution of utterances containing the honorific Ma’am. These deictic markers represent the “forced decorum” of Sandringham. For Diana, they often mask underlying tension or conflict with the staff. The most frequent address term Ma’am (38 utterances) is used to soften instructions, warnings, or advice. These honorifics serve as formal markers of respect and status, employed by staff such as servants, chefs, and equeries to uphold professional boundaries and reinforce the established social hierarchy.

Table 4. Distribution of “Ma’am” utterances in Spencer

No.	Speaker	Utterance
1	Servants	“Ma’am. Her majesty herself just a second ago set on these scales”
2	Servants	“Ma’am, if the bedroom’s cold”
3	Servants	“It’s from the storeroom, Ma’am”
4	Servants	“A coat from where, Ma’am?”
5	Servants	“Ma’am, they’re about to

		open the presents”	22	Equerry	“Ma’am, may I?”
6	Servants	“Ma’am the others are waiting”	23	Equerry	“Ma’am. I’ve been asked to ensure... you arrive for dinner on time”
7	Female Servant	“Maria, Ma’am”			“So please, there really is no time for indulgence, Ma’am”
8	Female Servant	“No, she couldn’t possibly think of it, Ma’am”	24	Equerry	
9	Maggie	“It’s maggie, ma’am”	25	Equerry	“I really have no idea what you are talking about, Ma’am”
10	Servant	“Ma’am. It’s a dessert. They’re waiting for you”			“Ma’am, there seems to have been some confusion...”
11	Equerry	“Still hungry, Ma’am?”	26	Dresser	
12	Equerry	“Their... lenses are terribly powerful these days, Ma’am.”	27	Dresser	“The curtains have been fastened, Ma’am”
13	Police	“Ma’am, according to the rules... we have to report it”	28	Dresser	“Ma’am, I will help you”
14	Police	“Are you warm enough, Ma’am?”	29	Male Servant	“Ma’am, dinner is served in 30 minutes”
15	Dresser	“I have dressed you before, Ma’am”	30	Male Servant	“Ma’am, dinner is served in ten minutes”
16	Dresser	“Happy Christmas, Ma’am.”	31	Female Servant	“Ma’am? Dessert is about to be served”
17	Dresser	“I really don’t know, Ma’am.”	32	Female Servant	“Ma’am, I’ve been told to wait for you”
18	Dresser	“Your hair isn’t set, Ma’am”	33	Female Servant	“Ma’am?”
19	Head Chef	“The pheasants are bred to be shot, Ma’am.”	34	Female Servant	“Ma’am please”
20	Equerry	“Forgive me, Ma’am. But you need to get ready for dinner”	35	Male Servant	“Where are you going, Ma’am?”
21	Equerry	“Your dresser needs to dress you Ma’am.”	36	Maggie	“Before I answer that question, Ma’am... I’m in love with you”
			37	Male	“Ma’am, shall I bring the

	Servant	car?"
38	Chef	"Are you leaving us, Ma'am?"

(Source: primary data)

When the Major (Head Equerry) warns Diana about the 'powerful lenses' of the paparazzi, the repetitive use of Ma'am constructs a façade of protective advice while simultaneously exerting surveillance and control. This aligns with Spencer-Oatey's (2007) observation that politeness in institutional discourse often prioritizes role obligations over interpersonal rapport. In this way, politeness becomes a mechanism of control disguised as respect. (Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021) similarly highlight that politeness functions as a relational management strategy shaped by institutional and cultural expectations, reinforcing how Diana's interactions were constrained by protocol. This dual function of politeness, oscillating between respect and control, reflects broader insights from (Jonathan et al., 2017), who emphasize that politeness and impoliteness are contextually co-constructed and often inseparable in institutional discourse.

From a pragmatic perspective, utterances such as "*Ma'am, dinner is served in ten minutes*" or "*Forgive me, Ma'am, but you need to get ready for dinner*" exemplify how staff members employ honorifics to soften directives that could otherwise appear imposing. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory explains this as a negative politeness strategy respecting the addressee's autonomy while still enforcing obligations. Yet in Diana's case, these strategies paradoxically highlight her lack of autonomy, as politeness becomes a linguistic instrument of institutional control.

Even in moments of intimacy, the protocol of politeness remains unbroken. Maggie's confession "*Before I answer that question, Ma'am... I'm in love with you*" illustrates the paradox of social deixis in the monarchy. The honorific persists even when expressing deep personal emotion, showing that genuine affection cannot escape the linguistic markers of hierarchy. This supports (Kádár & Haugh, 2013) concept of ritualized politeness,

where institutionalized honorifics constrain personal expression and maintain social distance regardless of emotional context.

From a biographical lens, the repeated use of Ma'am constructs what can be termed a linguistic tragedy. Politeness markers, intended to preserve dignity, instead become instruments of alienation. (Fatmah et al., 2024) argue that social deixis in everyday discourse often serves to maintain social image, though at the expense of individual expression. In Diana's case, the honorific Ma'am simultaneously elevates her status and erases her individuality, reducing her to a role-bound figure rather than a human being. This duality reveals how pragmatic politeness, when institutionalized, can function as both a shield and a prison.

Ultimately, the analysis of Ma'am in Spencer demonstrates that politeness is never neutral. It is a pragmatic tool that regulates power relations, enforces institutional hierarchy, and shapes identity negotiation. For Diana, politeness markers such as Ma'am embody the paradox of royal life: they preserve her symbolic authority while simultaneously restricting her personal agency. This tension illustrates the broader function of social deixis as a linguistic mechanism through which hierarchy, respect, and control are continuously reproduced in discourse.

Social Identity Differentiator

Social deixis in Spencer also functions to differentiate identity, showing how Diana is positioned simultaneously as a royal figure, a mother, and a private individual. Unlike honorifics such as Your Royal Highness that encode distance and protocol, certain address terms foreground her personal and emotional identity. This category is crucial because it demonstrates how language negotiates between Diana's institutional role and her personal self, exposing the tension between 'Diana the Human' and 'Diana the Icon.' As (Fu & Li, 2023) note, address terms carry pragmatic weight depending on context, and their use reflects shifting social relationships.

Table 5. Intimacy deixis through “Mummy”

No.	Speaker	Utterance
1	Prince Harry	“Mummy, I’m cold”
2	Prince William	“Mummy, why do we have to open our presents...”
3	Prince William	“I believe Mummy”
4	Prince William	“Mummy what happened?”
5	Prince William	“Mummy, you’re freezing”
6	Prince Harry	“When you arrived, Mummy, Sir”
7	Prince Harry	“Mummy, I actually have to open this or I’ll be sick”
8	Diana	“I’ll be your mom. That’s my job”
9	Prince William	“Mummy?”
10	Prince William	“Mummy, you said to tell if you were being really silly”
11	Prince William	“Mummy, you’re being really silly”
12	Prince William	“Please, mummy, we have to sit down before granny”
13	Prince William	“Mummy, just switch off your mind.”
14	Prince William	“Come’ on Mummy”
15	Prince Harry	“Right here, Mummy?”

(Source: primary data)

The most striking example of intimacy comes from her children. As shown in Table 4, William and Harry use the term “Mummy” fifteen times. This is the only consistent pattern of closeness Diana receives, and it stands out against the cold repetition of Ma’am. Utterances such as “*Mummy, I’m cold*” or “*Mummy, you’re freezing*” foreground her maternal identity, reminding the audience that beneath the royal protocol she is still a mother. Pragmatically, Mummy indexes emotional proximity and familial bonds, functioning as relational social deixis that encodes intimacy rather than hierarchy (Levinson, 1983). From a biographical perspective, this intimacy highlights Diana’s struggle to preserve her personal identity within the constraints of royal life.

Table 6. Personal address “Diana” in conflict and memory contexts

No.	Speaker	Utterance
1	Commoner	“Look it’s Diana”
2	Head Chef	“What the bloody hell are you doing here, Diana?”
3	Anne Boleyn	“Diana. Oh death, rock me to sleep”
4	Prince Charles	“The thing is, Diana, there has to be two of you”
5	Head Chef	“Why do you want wire cutters, Diana?”
6	Maggie (Imagined)	“Diana”
7	Diana’s Father	“Diana! Boys! Get inside!”
8	Anne Boleyn	“Diana. You know he gave her a picture of himself.”

(Source: primary data)

By contrast, other characters employ her personal name “Diana” in moments of confrontation, memory, or inner reflection. Table 5

shows eight instances of this usage, often by Prince Charles, her father, or imagined figures such as Anne Boleyn. These utterances do not carry intimacy but rather signal tension and conflict. For example, Charles says “*The thing is, Diana, there has to be two of you*”, emphasizing the failed balance between her personal self and her royal role. Here, the use of her name strips away honorifics, exposing vulnerability and rupture in social relations. (Allan, 2024) argues that personal names foreground individual identity, and in this case, “Diana” functions as a marker of her human self, often invoked in contexts of confrontation or emotional strain.

This specific form of “Diana” address functions as a linguistic marker that simultaneously signals emotional closeness and underlying tension. It is used by those who see her true self or represent her past and inner thoughts: her father, Prince Charles (usually during conflict), and her hallucinations of Anne Boleyn. Prince Charles uses “Diana” not as a sign of intimacy, but as a way to confront her, emphasizing the failed ‘two-person’ requirement of a royal marriage. Taken together, the contrast between Mummy and Diana illustrates how social deixis constructs Diana’s fragmented identity. With her children, she is a mother addressed in warmth and intimacy. With her husband, father, or imagined interlocutors, she is “Diana,” often in contexts of confrontation or emotional strain. And with the staff, she is Ma’am or Your Royal Highness, a figure bound by protocol. From a biographical perspective, these layers of address terms show how language itself becomes the site where Diana’s personal and institutional identities are continuously negotiated, and often painfully divided.

Sentence Effectiveness

In the biographical narrative of *Spencer*, these terms show the “cold efficiency” of the schedule that dictates Diana’s life. These are often used as “tags” at the end of short, urgent sentences to ensure protocol is followed. Short, repetitive phrases ending in “Ma’am” such as “*dinner is served in 30 minutes*” and “*ten minutes*” act as linguistic timers that restrict Diana’s autonomy. As shown in Table 6, these utterances function as pragmatic markers of

regulation, enforcing institutional protocol with minimal negotiation.

Table 7. Sentence effectiveness markers in Spencer

No.	Speaker	Utterance
1	Prince William	“Major William to Soldier Diana...”
2	Prince William	“Major William to soldier Diana. What’s your favorite color?”
3	Prince William	“Do you want to be the queen, soldier?”

(Source: primary data)

During the ‘game’ sequence, William adopts the terms “Sir”, “Major”, and “Soldier”. By calling his mother “Soldier Diana,” William uses deictic effectiveness to communicate within a framework she understands that they are both under orders and must “follow the rules” to survive. This functions as an “effective” way to communicate within the strict rules Diana hates, using the deictic markers of a “Soldier” to ask his mother why she is sad. Table 7 illustrates how these address terms are distributed and how they function as effective communicative devices within the narrative.

Table 8. Frequency and primary functions of address terms in Spencer

Address Term	Frequency	Primary Function
Ma’am	38	Maintaining Politeness / Protocol Identity
Mummy	15	Differentiation (Intimacy) Identity
Diana	8	Differentiation (Conflict/Past)
Your Royal Highness	7	Social Level Differentiation
Princess of	3	Social Level

Wales		Differentiation (Institutional)
Sir / Soldier	3	Sentence Effectiveness (Game/Protocol)

(Source: primary data)

The repeated use of short, urgent phrases ending in Ma'am demonstrates how language itself becomes a tool of regulation. These utterances function as pragmatic "timers," restricting Diana's autonomy and reinforcing the rigid schedule imposed upon her. Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness strategies helps explain this phenomenon: the markers are not designed to mitigate face, but rather to enforce institutional protocol. In this sense, Ma'am operates less as a politeness device and more as a linguistic command.

Similarly, William's adoption of military address terms highlights how sentence effectiveness can be reframed within a child's imaginative discourse. By calling his mother Soldier Diana, William creates a communicative framework that both acknowledges the rules and provides space for emotional inquiry. (Spencer-Oatey, 2007) notes that institutional discourse often relies on fixed markers to ensure compliance, and here William adapts those markers to express empathy within the very system Diana resents.

From a biographical perspective, these address practices underscore the paradox of Diana's life: even moments of intimacy with her children are mediated through the language of command and protocol. The cold efficiency of Ma'am and the playful yet regimented Soldier Diana both reveal how sentence effectiveness markers constrain her personal agency. This tension between protocol and individuality foreshadows the broader conclusion of the analysis, where social deixis is shown to fragment Diana's identity across institutional, maternal, and personal dimensions.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the use of social deixis in the film *Spencer* functions not only as a marker of social hierarchy but also as a linguistic mechanism that shapes and constrains Diana's

identity. The findings open a broader perspective on how social deixis can be used to understand the role of language in constructing public image while simultaneously exposing the personal vulnerability of biographical figures. In this context, language is not merely a tool of communication but also an instrument of power that regulates social relations and identity. Thus, this research contributes to the study of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, particularly in the representation of public figures in biographical narratives. Further research could explore comparative studies between Diana's representation in Spencer and other biographical films or texts to enrich the understanding of consistency and variation in the use of social deixis. Audience or reader reception toward the use of address terms could also provide new insights into how the public interprets Diana's identity through language. In addition, future studies may connect these phenomena with feminist theory, especially in examining how language reinforces or challenges gendered constructions within the institution of monarchy.

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