

Chapter 5

Blood Diamond

Italian Title:	<i>Blood Diamond – Diamanti di sangue</i>
Director:	Edward Zwick
Actors:	Leonardo DiCaprio; Djimon Hounsou; Jennifer Connelly
Country:	United States of America
Year:	2006
Length	143 minutes

The fisherman Solomon Vandy and his family are taken prisoner by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone. While being in prison in Freetown, Solomon meets Danny Archer, a Rhodesian smuggler, and they decide to cooperate because of a pink diamond that the fisherman finds. The men are eventually joined by Maddy, an American journalist. As in *Bend It like Beckham*, the plot allows receivers to get acquainted with the internal conflicts in Sierra Leone, focusing at the same time on the political attitudes of Western countries towards them. Maddy's lines when the main characters are approaching one of the refugees' camps entail this distance between the Western and African contexts, by referring to the filter of the media in the representation of the situation of some foreign countries (00:52:24 – 00:52:28):

- (12) MADDY: “[Western audience] Might catch a minute of this on CNN, somewhere between Sports and Weather.”

5.1 Linguistic Dimensions of the Movie

The several perspectives that interact in the development of the main story are also represented by the main linguistic dimensions, which are Standard English, Mende and Krio variations. As for the Standard English, it is the language spoken by Maddy as well as the language of the media and the world of politics, and its inclusion foregrounds the distance between the rich countries and Africa, also exemplified by the redundancy and complex lexical and structural characteristics of political and institutional discourse. One scene, set in the course of the G8 summit, is significant in this sense: several politicians discuss about the destiny of African countries and the socio-cultural problems connected to the “blood diamonds”, which are generally first collected by poor people and RUF prisoners, and then smuggled on behalf of large companies. Yet, their commitment is not practical: despite their interest, they are actually far from the actual places of the social and violent conflicts.

Mende, the second main linguistic feature, is the variety of language spoken in particular by the poor native people like Solomon. Its inclusion in the movie is meant to represent the fragmentation of Sierra Leone from a sociolinguistic perspective; in fact, its adoption is mainly in contrast with the Krio variety spoken by the RUF members. In addition to this, Mende has also a functional use connected to the scripted dimension of the film. The smuggler, Archer, can in fact be considered as a sort of mediator, since he is the one that is able to speak both Standard English and Krio. On the other hand, he cannot understand Mende, and for this reason, despite his general ability to prevail and lead most of the exchanges (as explained in the following section, about the conversation analysis of the film), such variety allows Solomon to create intimate moments, or to protect some information from Archer.

Finally, the members of RUF mainly resort to Krio, whose adoption in the film is characterised by peculiar mispronunciations, as well as lexical, syntactic and phonological deviations from the standard norms. What is more, the utterances also include colloquial terms, such as *bru* and *shona*, and particular forms of verb tenses and possessive adjectives, which are exemplified in extract (13) below, when Captain Poison threatens the prisoners that are looking for diamonds (00:07:53 – 00:07:55):

- (13) CAPTAIN POISON: “Any bastard **tink** he would joke with **me** diamond, I **go cut he troat**.”
CAPTAIN POISON: “Any bastard thinks he would joke with my diamond, I am going to cut his throat.”

The two transcriptions of (13) respectively represent the peculiar Krio pronunciation and its rendering in Standard English. The comparison highlights the lack of the interdental sound in both “think” and “throat”, respectively pronounced “tink” and “troat”, with the dental, voiceless /t/. Furthermore, the possessive adjectives “my” and “his” are rendered as “me” and “he”, whereas the form “to be going to” in “I’m going to cut his throat” is replaced by the simple verb “go”—“I go cut”.

Besides exploiting the linguistic varieties in the movie, the socio-cultural context informing the relationships between the characters is also represented by means of the structures of the interactions, as illustrated by the following scenes.

5.2 Conversation Analysis

Also the dialogues in *Blood Diamond* represent the ethnic and socio-cultural clashes between rich and poor people, and between RUF and the locals. In particular, it is possible to identify three main categories of interactions,

mostly characterised by status asymmetries and by the imposition of the high-status participants' will. The three main categories are represented by the ethnic, economic, and bureaucratic reasons that determine the outcome of the verbal struggles activated between speakers.

As for the first type, consider the following scene (14), in which an RUF Colonel is talking to some men before taking them prisoners and deciding whom to use to search diamonds (00:05:05 – 00:06:14):

- (14) COLONEL: "Bring forward the next one! Bastard! Bring forward the next one!"
 RUF MEMBER: "Long sleeve or short sleeve?"
 COLONEL: "Young man, young man, you must understand! The government wants you to vote, OK? They gonna tell you say: "The future is in your hands". We now the future. So we take your hands. No more hands, no more voting. Chop him! Spread the word: the Revolutionary United Front is coming!"
 RUF MEMBERS: "R-U-F!"
 COLONEL: "Bring forward the next one! Bring him forward! Bring him forward!"
 RUF MEMBER: "Long sleeve or short sleeve?"
 COLONEL: "Chop him! Hold on, hold on! Wait! Wait! Wait! Not this one! Look at him! Put him in the truck! Let's go. Bring him to the mines! He can work! He can work. Move, move, move, move! Next one! Next one! Next one!"

The colonel clearly plays high status in (14), as indicated by his lines and by the supporting moves uttered by the members. As for the question "Long sleeve or short sleeve?", repeated twice, it actually represents a fake eliciting move, since the speaker is not interested in knowing the answers, but he will only mutilate the prisoners, especially those who are not appropriate to work. The colonel's social superiority is also confirmed by his frequent use of imperatives, and by the ordering and explaining moves, when he tells the other members the destinations of the prisoners. What is more, when the man presents the political and social situation, thus trying to justify his actions, he resorts to informing and supporting moves, with an apparently different attitude towards the recipients. Indeed, also this behaviour confirms his high status—after all, he is speaking to men that are going to be mutilated, or forced to search diamonds.

When the situation changes, the position of the commander changes as well. In the following interaction (15), between Archer and Captain Rambo,

the RUF leader's social role is not similar to the one of the colonel in (14), due to the Rhodesian smuggler's greater economic power (00:09:26 – 00:09:50):

- (15)
- ARCHER: “Where is Commander Zero?”
- CAPTAIN RAMBO: “I am Captain Rambo.”
- ARCHER: “Right, right. I’ve seen your films, huh? I’m looking for Commander Zero, huh?”
- CAPTAIN RAMBO: “He’s inside. You talk to me! You are here to help us in our struggle against the government.”
- ARCHER: “I’m here to do business with Commander Zero, all right?”

An opening move is firstly identified. Commander Rambo, then, refuses to answer Archer's questions, due to ethnic reasons that create a conflict between their different ideologies. Archer is in fact a “White Rhodesian”, as the journalist Maddy will define him, and the RUF member is not keen on accepting orders from him. For these reasons, he tries to challenge the interlocutor's status, but the hostile characterisation of the interaction continues in the following turns, since Archer downgrades the commander by making a joke based on his name, “Rambo”. Also after such utterances, the latter tries to gain a leading position, by stating the supposed function and terms of Archer's cooperation. Anyway, it is the smuggler who eventually succeeds in achieving his goals, namely that of speaking to Commander Zero, in a dialogue that displays a similar turn-taking system ((16), 00:11:19 – 00:11:54):

- (16)
- ARCHER: “Then una boys dhem can use old rotten AK dehm against dehm government troop and their new weapons dehm, huh?”
- COMMANDER ZERO: “Maybe a could just kill you and take what you bring back!”
- ARCHER: “Then you get one more dead body? Instead of an airplane way full with grenade launchers. So a'm tink a go go to dehm government. Dehm government at least dehm go pay me huh?”
- COMMANDER ZERO: “Wait, wait, wait, my friend. Dis the tin you want? Ié. So many a noh no what do wid dehm all. Ehy, Archa, next time you bring satellite TV: I wanna see *Baywatch*.”

The interaction is mainly characterised by a sequence of questions and answers and by challenging moves. At the same time, the second turn is characterised by a raising move, since participants are acting as if they were gambling, trying to win the leading role in this exchange. An exchange that, even though Archer resorts to Krio (which exemplifies his role of mediator in the film), is ruled by the economic power rather than by the socio-linguistic features: in the end, Commander Zero accepts Archer's conditions because the man says that, if RUF did not meet his requests, he would talk to the government, indeed an enemy of the revolutionary army. A detailed analysis of Commander Zero's turn reveals that he is forced to respect Archer: in fact, even though he calls the man "a friend", he closes his lines with a cross-cultural challenging move, in the course of which he mentions *Baywatch*, a specific TV series that clearly refers to the Western (and American, in particular) lifestyle.

Finally, as for the bureaucratic reasons, consider the following dialogue (17) between Solomon and two men from the United Nations High Commissioner for the Refugees, to whom the fisherman asks for information about his wife and daughter (00:28:46 – 00:28:58):

- (17) SOLOMON: "Excuse me, my name's Solomon Vandy."
 MAN 1: "Check the list."
 SOLOMON: "I have checked the list."
 MAN 1: "File papers at the Office for Refugees."
 SOLOMON: "Sir, I have filed papers with the office."
 MAN 1: "Then God help you, because I can't."
 SOLOMON: "Please, Sir—"
 MAN 2: "Next!"

The above interaction is not between hostile participants, yet it is still characterised by status asymmetries, as exemplified by the alternation between ordering and obeying moves. Besides the conversation structure, it is also interesting to note that Solomon resorts to Standard English instead of Mende or Krio. This confirms the actualisation of the socio-cultural situations by means of language, namely that the linguistic dimensions are selected according to the participants' status and socio-cultural characterisations. From a structural perspective, the higher status of the two members of UNHCR is also conveyed by their use of the imperatives, but differently from the previous interactions, even though they prevail, a different attitude can be identified. Solomon, in fact, does not receive information about his family, so the expression "God help you" (turn 6), also reveals the men's impotence and frustration in the difficult situation—a shift in the expected behaviour of the

participants, suddenly cancelled by the final command, “Next!”, which officially puts an end to the interaction.

5.3 Target Script Analysis

Due to the cultural and linguistic features and peculiarities of the Italian dubbing, the original different varieties represent the main constraint for the translation of *Blood Diamond*, and in fact the target version is the result of neutralisation strategies, since only Standard Italian is used, whereas Krio is omitted, and the parts in Mende are subtitled. The analysis of the dubbing translation shall be focused on the functional and stylistic consequences of the inclusion of subtitles, on the rendering of culture-bound references, and on illustrating some cases of mistranslations.

Consider extract (18) below, from the first scenes of the film, when Solomon wakes his son up (00:01:03 – 00:01:22):

(18)	English script	Italian script
SOLOMON:	“Dia, [in Mende] don’t want to be late.”	“Dia, non devi fare tardi.”
DIA:	“[in English] English boys don’t go to school everyday.”	“[in Italian] I ragazzi inglesi non vanno a scuola tutti i giorni.”
SOLOMON:	“[in Mende] Everyday, just like you. So you can become a doctor, not mend the nets like your father. Now get out of my bed before I tan your behind with my fishing rod.”	“Tutti i giorni, come te. Così potrai diventare dottore, invece di rammendare reti come tuo padre. Forza, alzati, se no ti picchio con la canna da pesca.”

The dialogue is important because it still represents the cultural opposition between Western and African people, as well as Solomon’s desire of allowing his son to have a better job than his, by caring for the boy’s education. Yet, the Italian strategy of subtitled the parts in Mende does not provide an equivalent script, due to the typical features of subtitles, which recall the written style (Gottlieb 2005), more formal than the one generally used in the dialogues between a father and a son. At the same time, the Italian audience is not given the possibility of focusing on the boy’s different accent, as well as on the peculiar characteristics of the English uttered by Solomon, which for example lacks the subject “I” in the first turn.

Besides the linguistic varieties, the dialogues in the Italian script also have specific strategies connected to the adaptation of cultural notions. The following extracts (19) and (20) are interesting because they include Western-culture-bound events, with which Italian receivers should be familiar. Yet, the comparison between source and target versions reveals that, according to the translators, some cultural references like the ones included below may need to be made more accessible to viewers ((19), 01:14:31 – 01:14:36; (20), 01:16:03 – 01:16:08):

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|------|--|--|
| (19) | English script | Italian script |
| | ARCHER: “I got sent away to South Africa in 1978 when the munts overran us.” | “Sono stato mandato in Sud Africa nel 1978 quando fummo cacciati dai ribelli.” |
| (20) | English script | Italian script |
| | MADDY: “My Dad came home from the war in ’69.” | “Mio padre è tornato a casa dal Vietnam nel ’69.” |

In both extracts the cultural references are made explicit, also the one concerning the war in Vietnam. Extract (20) in particular reveals that the translations stem from expectations in terms of the audience’s knowledge, for the year alone is not considered enough to activate in the receivers’ minds the association (by means of “top-down” processes) to a specific historical event. It is for these reasons that the processes of film production and translation are considered in this book as instances of dialogic, communicative structures between senders/translators and recipients/viewers, which are affected by the linguacultural and cognitive backgrounds, as well as ruled by specific parameters (cf. Sections 1.3 and 2.2.1 above). As for (20), the translators implicates that the audience may not get the mental connection originally prompted by the line “the war in ’69”, and therefore the conveyance of the semantic dimension is negotiated by means of an explanation process, in order to render the illocutionary force more accessible to target receivers.

Finally, (21) below only contains an example of mistranslation, when Archer tries to bribe a soldier he meets. Anyway also the following extract can provide information on some of the constant features of the Italian dubbing translations (00:13:39 – 00:13:49):

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| (21) | English script | Italian script |
| | ARCHER: “Now, look, why don’t I just look the other way, all right? You take one | “Ora, perché non ti giri dall’altra parte, ok? Ti prendi uno o due |

or two of these stones sassolini, e compri un
and get something regalino a tua moglie, o
lacquer for the wife, or magari alla tua amante,
maybe the mistress, all eh?”
right?”

By saying “*perché non ti giri*”, the original message is completely modified: in fact, in the source text Archer is trying to communicate what he is going to do—namely, to bribe the soldier—whereas the subject of the sentences in the target version becomes the soldier. This may only seem a mistranslation case, without cultural or cognitive justifications. Actually, this different translation is connected to one of the following lines, namely the sentence “*Ti prendi uno o due sassolini*”, which contains the same object pronoun “*ti*”. The latter is in the form of a reflexive, more specifically its use corresponds to the typical feature of the diamesic, spoken variety of Italian defined as “*riflessivo apparente*” (cf. Jezek 2005). Even though one may contend that the latter strategy may be classified a diastratic variation that perhaps compensates for the lack of variation from Standard Italian, to Mende, to Krio, it is actually claimed that it may represent instead one of the characteristics connected to the production of dubbese, the artificial “television language” typical of dubbing (Antonini and Chiaro 2009: 111), which may alternate features from written and oral discourse, in the production of utterances that do not always correspond to those normally used by actual speakers (cf. Perego 2005: 26).