

The image features a stylized, pixelated version of the Jamaican flag. The flag consists of a green upper triangle, a black lower triangle, and a yellow saltire (X-shape) in the center. The colors are rendered with a dithered, digital effect. The flag is set against a white background with a thin black border.

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JAMAICAN ACCENT

***YU KNOW
HOW FI
CHAT PATWAH?***



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- ✘ The Jamaican accent adopts words and structure from Jamaican Patois, a language that combines words from English, Patois and several West African languages. The language does not differentiate between a subject and object and it does not have a subject-verb agreement. It is an accent that is commonly heard in reggae and Creole music and is ubiquitous across the isle of Jamaica.

JAMAICAN ACCENT VS. JAMAICAN PATOIS

- ✘ Although the official language of Jamaica is Standard English, many Jamaicans also speak Patois which is a separate dialect/language. Jamaican Patois (also known as “Patwa”, “Patwah” or “Jamaican Creole”) is the language that is used by most Jamaicans in casual everyday conversations while Standard English is normally reserved for professional environments. However, Speaking with a Jamaican accent is merely speaking English while pronouncing the words similarly to how Jamaicans speak patois.

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- ✘ Jamaican Patois is a language that borrowed words from many different languages, for example, English, Spanish and some West African languages. However, the pronunciations of these words are very similar to Jamaican English. One thing to keep in mind as you learn Jamaican Patois is that it is not a strict, rule-oriented language where there is a "right way" and a "wrong way" to say things. Some words can be pronounced and spelled differently but still mean the same thing (e.g. both 'Pickney' and 'Pickeney' translates to 'Child'). The important thing is whether or not what you are saying can be understood.

GRAMMATICAL FEATURES OF JAMAICAN PATOIS

Jamaican Patois	Standard English
Mi run	I run
im run	He runs
shi run	She runs
Wi run	We run
Dem run	They run
Unu run	You all run
eyah run	It runs
Yu run	You run

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- ✘ As we can see in the previous slide, there is no subject-verb agreement in Patois. All verbs are spoken and written the same regardless of the subject. To form a plural add dem, such as pen dem for pens or by adding nuff at the start of a word, sometimes with a number. For pronouns, im works for both he and she, as there is no gender difference in the third person. The pronoun also doesn't change from subject to object. So while English would go from I to me, Jamaican employs mi at both spots in the sentence. In the language, standard pronouns are used to express possession. Substitute "a" for state of being verbs, such as "I am a father" translates to "mi a fada." Adopt these structures and rules for a successful Jamaican accent.

TENSE

- ✘ Unlike Standard English, in the Jamaican Patois, the verb does not change. Instead a new word is introduced and placed in front of the verb; for example:
- ✘ Present tense:

Jamaican Patois	Standard English
Mi guh	I am going
Di ooman a guh a town	The woman is going to town
Im a cum	He is coming
Mi a cum	I am coming

× Past tense:

Jamaican Patois	Standard English
Mi did guh	I went
Di ooman did guh a town	The woman went to town
Im did cum	He came
Mi did cum	I came

✘ Grammar:

✘ 1. The deletion of the BE copula

✘ *Ex. The house have to clean* (The house has to be cleaned).

✘ 2. The flexible use of pronouns in subject/object position.

✘ *Ex. Them (Dem) go straight home after school.* (They go straight home after school).

✘ 3. The use of done to mark or indicate a completed action.

✘ *Ex. Mi done forget about it.* (I forgot about it).

× Word order:

- × 1. Order of Words in Jamaican Creole may differ from that in the standard variety.
 - × *Ex. gimi dem.* (Give them to me).
- × 2. The use of *so* to express emphasis.
 - × *Ex. Is here so mi live.* (I live right there).
- × 3. The formation of interrogation may take on a different word order.
 - × *Ex. Who tell you that?* (Who told you that).

× Pronunciation:

× 1. The addition of /h/ before vowels.

× *Ex. The bottle hempty still.* (The bottle is still empty).

× 2. The deletion of /h/.

× *Ex. Im a oly man.* (He is a holy man).

× 3. The /th/-/D/ in initial position in such words such as the, there, this, that, them and then.

× *Dere is nobody nowhere in sight.* (There is nobody anywhere in sight).

THE LINGUISTIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JAMAICAN PATOIS AND STANDARD ENGLISH

- ✘ Phonology:
- ✘ Jamaican Patois does not use the 'th' sound but substitutes with two other sounds: the 't' sounds as in 'tik' for the English 'thick' and the 'd' sounds as in 'dem' for the English 'them'.
- ✘ Jamaican Patois does not pronounce the 'h' sound at the beginning of English words. Therefore English 'hour' becomes 'our'. Similarly there is the tendency to hyper-correct and pronounce the 'h' sound at the beginning of words that do not require it, therefore English 'egg' becomes 'hegg' and 'exam' becomes 'hexam' and so on.

× Lexicon

- × Some Patois words that appear to be similar to English words do not carry the same meaning, e.g. 'Ignorant' in Patois means easily angered, very upset and not lacking knowledge (which is the English definition). Another example is 'Belly' that in patois can refer to pregnancy.
- × Some English words are compounded to create nouns not present in English for example 'Foot bottom' for the sole of the feet and 'Eye water' for tears.
- × Some Patois words are formed by reduplication (base words are repeated to form new words). For example friedi friedi to mean fearful or timid, chati chati to mean talks excessively or out of turn.
- × Some Patois words are adopted from other non-English languages, eg, maroon-Spanish, pikni-Portuguese, unu, (you plural) -Igbo

✘ Syntax

- ✘ Patois mainly uses syntax to highlight certain elements within a sentence while English often uses pronunciation by verbally stressing that which is to be emphasized. For example Patois: Is **Susan** eat di chicken? versus English **Susan** ate the chicken? Patois: Is **di chicken** Susan eat ? versus Susan ate **the chicken**?

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KEEP

CALM

AND FAKE A

JAMAICAN

ACCENT