

## ABSTRACT

### Past Time Expression In Jamaican Creole - Implications for Teaching English

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The persistence of the past tense error in the written work of some Jamaican Creole (JC) speakers learning Standard Jamaican English (SJE) led to the present study which describes past time expression in Jamaican Creole. The intention is to underline the difference between the means employed for expressing past time in the two codes which complement each other in the Jamaican situation.

Earlier studies have looked at JC at the level of sentence and have identified the dependence on adverbials and on other contextual clues for past time indication in a language in which the verb is frequently unmarked. The present study examines dialogic units limited by the topic introduced in the initial question, to see where within a given unit, indications of past time may be identified or inferred.

An important finding is that the single grammatical marker of past time the particle en (with variants ben, men, wen, did) is more consistently used to mark background

information within discourse than to mark, as has been suggested by earlier researchers, the simple past with stative and the past before past with non-stative verbs. The unmarked form of the verb has been found to mark foreground information. Discourse features normally associated with both text and discourse analysis are described and illustrated to show how past time orientation may be inferred from their presence.

The implications of this kind of information for the learning of SJE in the Jamaican classroom, are explored and strategies which reflect this new thrust, are suggested.