

Fit's a' this? New study will focus on the Doric

IT is a skill common to many of the North-East's loons and quines (men and women).

But now academics are to study how they are able to switch effortlessly between their local Doric dialect and a form of language understandable to 'outsiders'.

Researchers at Glasgow University are investigating the growth of 'bidialectalism' in Scotland and what it means to the long-term future of linguistics.

The study is being funded by a three-year Economic and Social Research Council grant.

The team will focus on the town of Buckie, Banffshire, where they will measure the speech patterns of three generations aged from 15 to 80.

The subjects will be interviewed twice, firstly by a Doric speaker – an 'insider' – and then again by someone with no ties to the area – an 'outsider'.

The study hopes to discover why increasing numbers of people are now using two separate dialects in everyday life.

It is thought that bidialectalism may be the root of a new dual identity within younger generations, whereby one dialect is used in the local community and a different one spoken elsewhere.

Dr Jennifer Smith, principal investigator on the project, said yesterday: 'We are investigating one community, Buckie, a small fishing town which has a highly specialised dialect.

'This local dialect is used the majority of the time when talking to other community members, and indeed speaking "posh" is a big no-no within the community.

'However, speakers do use a more standard variety in certain situations, such as in school and talking to outsiders.

'We are hoping that this study will help us learn how our language is evolving and what to expect from it going into the future.'

