In a snapshot description of the Carlisle dialect Hughes et al. (2012) come to the conclusion that 
[T]he similarities between the accents of Carlisle and Newcastle are frequently remarked upon, al-
though the boundary between the traditional Cumbrian and Northumbrian dialects follows the Pen-
nine watershed quite closely. It is therefore possible that east-west contact over recent generations 
has resulted in a reduction in the phonological differences between Carlisle and Newcastle English 
(Hughes et al. 2012: 124; emphasis mine).

Indeed, while we see diverging tendencies between the geographically close urban accents Newcastle 
and Sunderland English (Beal et al. 2012), dialect convergence toward the former accent seems to 
take place in Carlisle English. However, even though comments have been made about converging 
tendencies between the two accents, a study, which confirms these anecdotal comments is lacking so 
far.

Therefore, the aim of this talk is to provide a quantitative analysis of this change in Carlisle English. 
The variation and change in four variables is investigated: Definite Article Reduction and H-dropping 
which are both features that are not present in Newcastle/Northumbrian English but are found in 
Cumbrian English as well as linking /r/ which is increasing in Newcastle English (Foulkes 1997). The 
fourth variable is the realization of the unstressed vowels lettER and commA, which are described as 
fairly open in Newcastle English but they are traditionally closer in Carlisle English.

The analysis is based on sociolinguistic interviews conducted between 2007 and 2010. To add the real 
time view to this data, oral history recordings conducted in the 1980s by the local museum have also 
been included in the analysis. The speakers in these recordings were born around the turn of the 20th 
century and were mainly factory workers, i.e. speakers who probably represent the Carlisle dialect in 
its most vernacular form.

Keywords: Language and identity, Dialect Convergence and Divergence.