

**Language and Identity in Wartime Letters:
The Correspondence of Ernst and Irene Guicking (1940–1945)**

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With this abstract, I would like to propose a presentation for the workshop ‘*Language History “from Below”: Data Sources and (Digital) Approaches*,’ focusing on the linguistic and socio-cultural aspects of field post letters (*Feldpostbriefe*).

My study examines the linguistic and emotional dynamics of *Feldpostbriefe* exchanged between Ernst and Irene Guicking during the Second World War, employing the framework of ‘language history from below.’ These personal letters offer a rare glimpse into the vernacular and self-representation strategies of a non-elite couple navigating the psychological challenges of separation during wartime.

Drawing from a digitized corpus of their correspondence, this study combines qualitative and quantitative analysis to investigate recurring linguistic patterns, narrative structures, and socio-pragmatic markers. Digital tools such as AntConc and MaxQDA were employed to uncover the interplay of personal expression and broader socio-linguistic norms. Some of the key findings reveal how the couple used metaphor, rhetorical strategies, and narrative cohesion to bridge the emotional distance between home and front, constructing a shared sense of identity and resilience in historical crises.

This research demonstrates how ego-documents like *Feldpostbriefe* enrich our understanding of historical linguistic practices by highlighting non-elite perspectives. Furthermore, it underscores the value of integrating digital tools into historical sociolinguistic analysis.