

# **Language of Migration: Guest workers in Germany**

## **– Teaching Diversity and Critical Thinking**

Suin Roberts

*Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne, U.S.A.*

I presented the following research findings in my German Cultural History course and my Introduction to International Studies course when we discussed migration in Germany. I introduced media analysis to investigate with the students how media discourse affects how people perceive migrants and how stereotypes and prejudice arise. By hearing about and discussing my research findings the students had to think critically about language, read between the lines, and closely examine the socio-political background of post-war migration in order to understand language choices in newspaper headlines. While migration in Germany is not a new topic, one finds that the Turkish migrant experience dominates in the literature. In addition to providing a general picture of guest workers in Germany, therefore, I presented newspaper articles that deal with the Korean migrant experience in Germany so that students might gain a view of migrant history in Germany different from the Turkish perspective.

The students learned how to analyze headlines and deconstruct the meaning of words by questioning word choices. They also came to recognize patterns and topoi, which can create fear among the mainstream population and which often create the perception of the guest worker as the dangerous “other.” By the end of my presentation, my students had grasped not only a new piece of recent German cultural history but also a series of techniques for analyzing the media. They also learned that the migrant experience in Germany is not homogeneous but different for each migrant group.

As early as the 1960s Koreans began to come to Germany to fill the labor demand of the time. Korean women mostly came as nurses, and Korean men as miners. Like all workers from outside of Germany, they expected certain challenges in the new and foreign culture, but what they may not have anticipated was how the media would comment on the role they played in Germany and largely create their image in the minds of the German-reading public. In “*Sanfte Engel aus Korea: Korean Nurses in the German Media*,” I examined the fate of Korean women in Germany and found that, although they experienced difficulties and the media sometimes exoticized and infantilized them, the sort of coverage they received was also largely positive, even if occasionally discriminatory. In this analysis, I will turn my attention to the fate of Korean men in Germany.

As it happens, the German media treated Korean men differently than Korean women. In fact, the coverage the men received mirrored that of most other guest workers in Germany, but over time the relationship between the Korean miners and their German employers seemed to worsen. Sadly, many points of contention between the Korean men and the Germans around them can be traced back to cultural misunderstandings and occasionally also to cultural differences that neither side seemed capable of bridging. Before examining the experience of Korean men in Germany, it is worthwhile to consider the general media coverage of guest workers from the sixties to the beginning of the twenty-first century. Within the context of the historical development of the media coverage of guest workers, the case of the Korean male in Germany takes on its own significance.

This analysis concentrates on headlines from newspapers from *Der Spiegel* archive and the migration archive in Cologne. Listed in chronological order, the headlines demonstrate an evolution in media sentiment towards migrants from the 1950s to the present. Headlines are of special significance, because they often represent topoi, or specific stereotypes about a given culture, which are strategically placed and comprised of words chosen to attract attention.

Because media scholars investigate a picture of a multicultural society as presented by journalists, they can identify subtle forms of racism and nationalism that tend to threaten otherwise peaceful coexistence (Butterwegge 2006). Analyses and diachronic comparisons of the lexicon of various media reports have shown, for example, whether relationships with migrant populations improve or worsen over time (cf. Huhnke 1997, Jung 1997, Niehr & Böke 2000, Meier-Braun 1998 & 2002, Schatz et al. 2000, Yildiz 2006). They also can show how by simply coining new more culturally sensitive terms one can seemingly alter host and migrant experiences of each other. The terminology and topoi used in newspaper articles will change according to various economic ups and downs, but it is not uncommon for articles to feature the *disadvantage* topos and the *danger* topos when reporting on foreigners in Germany (cf. Böke 1997, Wengeler 1997, 2000, 2003).

Past studies have revealed that media reports have often divided foreigners in Germany into groups categorized as “desired” and “less desired,” often commenting on either specific qualities of the various migrant groups or on their actions in Germany (cf. Ruhrmann 1997, 2002). Migrants from Southern Europe have often been depicted as more desirable, for instance, because they seem less “foreign” to Germans, whereas migrants from further away have often been presented as “less desirable.” The media also have placed an alarming focus on perceptions of the migrant groups’ foreignness. Headlines have called attention to certain cultural differences, sometimes making them out to be strange, instead of simply foreign. It is not surprising perhaps that, while the

media have focused on problems of the migrant population, they rarely have criticized the dominant or host culture. Such biased discourse on migrants and the migrant experience often impacts how society responds to a migrant population. Thus, the mass media play a role in ethicizing society, literally making first-generation migrants and subsequent generations into foreigners through specific sets of metaphors and stereotyped language.

Media not only influence the native readers of the host country, however, but also the migrants themselves. In general, the mass media influence how people perceive social reality even catalyze ethnic discrimination (Butterwegge 2006, 188). It is perhaps natural that frequent reports on crime and a focus on specific cultural differences perceived as negative raise fear among the native population, for instance, but they can also cause low esteem or even anger among the non-native population. Guest workers played a significant role in Germany's economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s, but the initial euphoria of their arrival faded quickly and problems developed. Fortunately, we can discern a positive change in media coverage over the decades towards more culturally sensitive and less marginalizing language.

The headlines from the 1950s and 1960s reflect a sense of insecurity in naming the labor migrants. *Fremdarbeiter*, or "foreign worker," was a term originally employed during Nazi Germany to refer to the workers from Eastern Europe who were forced to work in Germany, but it appears again during the period of guest worker recruitment: "Fremdarbeiter als Ersatz für Rekruten. Erhard plant Einsatz von 200 000 Italienern" ('Foreign workers as replacement for recruits. Erhard plans employment of 200,000 Italians') (*Hamburger Echo*, 10. November 1954). While the general public often referred to the first non-German workers as "foreign workers," perhaps for lack of a better term, the new term "guest worker" finally entered the lexicon in the early 1960s. This new term appears to be less discriminating—after all, one is now called a "guest" and not a "foreigner—but it quickly lost its initial charm. People realized its intrinsic semantic flaw: Guests are usually not made to work.

Sensitivity toward the feelings of guest workers was not necessarily a concern in the early years, however, for the media portrayed them much like objects, speaking of "guest worker rental," for example, as if they could simply be lent out for money: "Gastarbeiter-Verleih: Aus der Westentasche" ('Guest worker rental: from the vest pocket') (*Der Spiegel*, 1960). Guest workers were clearly needed for the German economy, and the media often placed the focus on the utilitarian purpose behind the hiring of guest workers. They were described as useful human resources, in a very literal sense, but not necessarily as people with whom Germans would associate: "Gastarbeiter – nützlich und gefragt, aber nicht beliebt" ('Guest workers – useful and sought-after, but not liked') (*Industriekurier*, 12. Oktober 1968). It is worth noting that the word "useful"

(*nützlich*) is generally used in reference to an object. A tool is useful, for instance. More abstractly, a piece of information can be useful. In this case, guest workers were seemingly useful tools for solving German economic problems.

From the perspective of the media, guest workers also appeared to be a problem or even inherently bad people, but some reports reminded the German readers that the hired help was indeed human: “Gastarbeiter sind auch Menschen: 800 000 ausländische Arbeiter in der Bundesrepublik – So sehen die anderen das aktuelle Problem” (‘Guest workers are also human beings: 800,000 foreign workers in the Federal Republic’) (*Hamburger Echo*, 8. August, 1962). The majority of Germans probably needed no reminder that the guest workers were human beings, but headlines suggested that, even if they solved economic problems, the mainstream population felt that these guests created new problems: “Gastarbeiter sind besser als ihr Ruf” (‘Guest workers are better than their reputation’) (*Hamburger Echo*, 26. August, 1964). While this headline appears to present a better image of the guest worker, it also stresses that they are not popular in German society. The underlying implication is discriminatory.

The topos of foreign *destructiveness* communicated that the guest workers were something like a potentially harmful natural force, such as a flood: “Der Zustrom an Ausländern läßt nach” (‘The flood of foreigners slows down’) (*Industriekurier Düsseldorf*, 3. April, 1963) or “Gastarbeiter-Zustrom stark abgeebbt” (‘Guest worker flood died down significantly’) (*Handelsblatt Düsseldorf*, 1. August 1967). Readers perhaps felt a sense of relief upon seeing these headlines, since no one would want to be “flooded by masses” of guest workers. The headline seems to suggest that the flood was held in check, but it also conveys the sense that Germany can just barely contain this destructive flow from beyond its borders. Elsewhere, the arrival of guest workers in Germany is compared to a greedy mob grabbing at German money, one headline describing the situation as a “migration of peoples to German pay checks”: “Gastarbeiter: Per Moneta: Die Völkerwanderung zu Westdeutschlands Lohntüten hat in diesem Jahr ihren Höhepunkt erreicht (‘Guest workers: For money: The migration to German pay checks has reached its climax’) (*Der Spiegel*, Nr.41/1964). Clearly hyperbolic, this headline is set up to create a sense of both relief and increased fear. On the one hand, Germans can relax in the knowledge that this process has reached its climax and can go no further, but the headline plays with popular fears, too, because the foreigners seem to be going after the natives’ paychecks.

During the 1970s media sentiment did not change significantly. Headlines implied that Germans may not consider guest workers entirely a part of German social reality: “Gastarbeiter gehören zur Bevölkerung” (‘Guest workers belong to the population’) (*Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 1. Februar 1970). Was the average German’s opinion of guest workers that they did not belong to the German population? It is difficult to say,

but the aforementioned headline certainly gives this impression. Elsewhere, one can read of guest workers as people who belong, but they are seemingly relegated to a lower position in society: “Bürger zweiter Klasse?” (‘Second-class citizens?’) (*Der Dom*, 15. November 1970). Even though this headline poses a question, it cannot hide the fact that guest workers may indeed still be perceived as second-rate citizens.

Much like in the sixties, we encounter headlines in the seventies that objectify guest workers. In one case, the headline explains that guest workers were no longer “cheap,” as if they might be goods at a market: “Ausländische Arbeitnehmer sind nicht mehr “billig”” (‘Foreign employees not cheap anymore’) (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 20. November 1970). Another headline uses guest workers to remind the reader of difficulties Germans in earlier years had in accepting modernity, for the guest workers are called the “robots of the Germans”: “Roboter der Deutschen: Angst vor Gastarbeitern” (‘Robots of the Germans: Fear of guest workers’) (*Die Zeit*, Oktober 1972). This headline not only objectifies the guest worker as an unfeeling non-human creature built for work, but it suggests that they frighten the Germans who made them. No doubt, the guest worker was indeed becoming the misunderstood monster created by mad media genius. Not all guest workers were created equally, however, for the media marginalized one type in particular, the Turk: “Gettos: Stopp für Türken” (‘Ghettos: Stop the Turks’) *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 45/1974. This headline implies that the Turkish guest workers necessarily live in ghettos and that they need to be stopped from coming to Germany, lest Germany become ghettoized. In fact, however, the media make it clear that guest workers in general were not welcome in Germany: “Gastarbeiter: Je weniger, desto besser” (‘Guest workers: The fewer the better’) (*Der Spiegel*, Nr. 50/1975).

In the 1980s, the media reporters found new words, but the fear or at least rejection of guest workers did not disappear. Indeed, the eighties seem to be the climax of a period of insensitive, discriminatory, and aggressive news reports. Headlines presented clear imperatives that guest workers should leave the country: “Finished, aus, you go, hau ab” (‘Finished, over, you go, get lost’) (*Der Spiegel*, 16. Juni 1980). Why this headline contains both English and German is unclear. Perhaps it suggests that foreigners communicate in a sort of pigeon German? The article following this headline talks about a foreign assault (“Ansturm”), and asks such rhetorical questions as whether Germany will be flooded by a wave of foreigners (“Wird Deutschland überflutet von einer Fremdenwelle?”) or even run over by them (“Werden die Deutschen überannt?”). Headlines of this period also demanded that the guest workers leave Germany and generalized them as one unified people, the hated outsiders: “Raus mit dem Volk: Bomben und Hetzparolen – in der Bundesrepublik wächst der Haß gegen Ausländer” (Out with the people: bombs and hate tirades – hatred against foreigners is growing in the Federal Republic’) (*Der Spiegel*, Nr. 38/1980). Not simply anti-foreigner sentiment

but all-out hatred of foreigners seemed to be growing in Germany during the eighties: “Ausländerfeindlichkeit: Exodus erwünscht” (‘Foreigner hatred: exodus desired’) (*Der Spiegel*, Nr. 18/1982). Although this headline calls for an “exodus,” a term from the Old Testament that refers to the mass departure of Israelites from Egypt, it also recalls more recent events in German history during the Second World War, which involved mass exile, deportation, and eventually mass murder. Other headlines took a slightly kinder tone, accepting that guest workers had come to Germany for work, but reminding them to leave when they were finished: “Erst arbeiten, arbeiten – dann raus, raus (‘First work, work – then out, out’)” (*Der Spiegel*, Nr. 25/1982). Another headline states: “Nimm deine Prämie und hau ab” (‘Take your bonus and get lost’) (*Der Spiegel*, Nr.34/1983). Both of these headlines express in no uncertain terms, although in a derogatory and aggressive tone, that guest workers should leave Germany.

In the 1990s and the 2000s, the relationship between Germans and foreigners, as the media presented it, changed. In fact, the media language became more sensitive and less generally ethnocentric. Cultural differences remained a topic of debate, but the tone lost some of its aggressive bite, and the situation of migrants was portrayed in ways that did not marginalize certain groups. Nonetheless, headlines sometimes continued to emphasize seemingly unbridgeable cultural differences between German natives and various guest workers: “Deutsche und Ausländer: Gefährlich fremd” (‘Germans and foreigners: Dangerously foreign’) (*Der Spiegel*, 14. April 1997). This headline not only separated Germans and migrants, it suggested that those two groups might never live together peacefully due to fundamental cultural differences.

In 2000 and the following years, we find mixed headlines, but many tend to express understanding of the guest workers’ position in Germany. Some are indeed critical of a multicultural Germany, calling it “a lie”: “Lebenslüge Multikultur” (‘Multiculturalism a grand delusion’) (*Rheinische Post*, 30. Oktober 2000). Others continue to speak of a migrant “assault” against Europe itself: “Ansturm der Migranten: Europa macht dicht” (‘attack of migrants: Europe closes up’) (*Der Spiegel*, 17. Juni 2002). Still others are eager to point out, however, that immigrants are colleagues at the work place: “Kollege Immigrant” (‘Colleague immigrant’) (*Die Zeit*, 28.9.2006, Nr. 40). Thus, guest workers no longer appear to be robots who have to be feared, but colleagues who have worked in Germany for decades and who are now retiring. Indeed, some guest workers even gain a voice of their own, and they express their fear of being alone, as is clear in the following headline: “Die Einsamkeit tötet mich” (‘The Loneliness kills me’) (*Der Spiegel Online*, 29. Oktober 2004). This particular article tells of guest workers who struggle with the reality of retiring and growing old in Germany.

These headlines from the sixties to the year 2004 serve as a general context within which one can understand the experience of Korean men who came to Germany

to work as miners. Nearly 7000 Korean men came to Germany in the early 1960s and 1970s, and they received negative media coverage similar to other guest workers. It is worth repeating that the media coverage that Korean women who came to Germany as nurses received was perhaps an exceptional case, since it did not correspond to more general trends in media reports on guest workers in Germany at the time. Nevertheless, the media representation of Korean nurses was also deceptive, for it appeared welcoming but was actually just as biased as the coverage of other migrant groups. Korean women in Germany became the targets of what linguists call “positive discrimination.” Much like other migrant groups, the German media received the Korean men with negative reports during the early years of guest worker employment. It is perhaps also significant that there are relatively few media reports on Korean miners in Germany, whereas one can find an abundance of articles on the Korean nurses. The media representations of Korean men that do exist, however, corroborate the generally negative view of guest workers at the time. Being from a distant country and an altogether different culture, the Korean men belonged to the “less desired migrants” in Germany.

Three articles, one from 1965, a second one from 1980, and a third from 2002, illustrate the change of tone in media coverage of Korean men analogous to the general changes in the media representations of guest workers discussed above. As a distinct group, however, the Korean men in Germany had their own distinct set of difficulties. One can clearly see how, over time, the sentiment towards the Korean miners changed from general ignorance of their situation to a critical stance toward them that categorized them as similar to other guest worker groups, and finally to a developing understanding of the perspective of the Korean guest worker situation in Germany.

In an article from 1965, when many of the Korean miners had just arrived, the media referred the Korean men as “Praktikanten” (‘interns’) from Asia. It is true that many of the Korean men who came to Germany to mine had not been trained as miners in Korea, but giving them the status of interns may have undermined their acceptance by their German colleagues:

Der westdeutsche Steinkohlenbergbau findet in europäischen Ländern kaum noch Gastarbeiter. Viele Arbeiter lassen sich zwar in ihrem Heimatland für den deutschen Bergbau anheuern, wandern jedoch dann vorzugsweise in Hüttenwerke ab, um nicht Untertage arbeiten zu müssen. Die Zechen können ihren Arbeitskräftemangel (rund 20 000 offene Stellen bei insgesamt 320 000 Beschäftigten) nur zum Teil durch Praktikanten aus asiatischen Ländern decken: bis zum Spätherbst soll die Zahl der Koreaner unter Tage von 2000 auf 2500 erhöht werden. (“Gastarbeiter” *Der Spiegel*, 28. Juli 1965)

(The West German coal mining industry rarely finds guest workers from European countries. While many workers get recruited in their home countries for the German coal mining industry, once they are here they switch to smelters, just so that they don't have to work underground. The coal mines can only partly cover the demand by employing interns from Asia (ca. 20,000 job vacancies among 320,000 employees): By late fall, the number of Koreans underground will be raised from 2,000 to 3,500.)

Many of the Korean men who came to Germany were not miners, as mentioned above, but academics and white-collar workers, a circumstance that led to significant feelings of frustration on both sides. Needless to say, neither the Germans nor the Koreans felt that their expectations had been met. In 1980, the article "Angst vor dem Korb" noted that the Korean men felt exploited and that their coal mine managers felt equally cheated. According to the article, it escalated into a "fiasco":

Zum Fiasko geriet die Beschäftigung von Südkoreanern im deutschen Bergbau. Die Koreaner fühlen sich ausgebeutet, die Ruhr-Manager kommen sich ausgenutzt vor. (*Der Spiegel*, Br. 15/1980)

(The employment of South Koreans in the German coal mining industry turned into a fiasco. The Koreans feel exploited and the Ruhr managers feel short-changed.)

This article also described the process by which the Korean men had been selected to work in Germany as guest workers. They are said to have come into the city of Seoul accompanied by their whole "clan," mostly poor and carrying their few belongings with them in an ox cart:

Im Südkorea des Generals Park Chung Hee galt ein Arbeitsvertrag mit deutschen Bergbaugesellschaften als das große Los. Ganze Sippen karrten mit dem Ochsespann aus den Provinzen Kangwan oder Chungchon in die Hauptstadt Seoul, um die große Reise vorzubereiten. Über 6000 sind seit Mitte der sechziger Jahre aus dem Land der Morgenstille, wie Korea zu deutsch heißt, in die Pütts von Gelsenkirchen und Oberhausen gekommen. (*Der Spiegel*, Br. 15/1980)

(In the South Korea of General Park Chung Hee, a work contract with German coal mining companies was perceived as a big lottery ticket. The whole clan carted with oxen from the provinces Kangwan or Chungchon into the capital

Seoul in order to prepare for the big trip. More than 6,000 have come to coal mines in Gelsenkirchen and Oberhausen since the middle of the 1960s from the country of the morning calm, as Korea is called in German.)

This description certainly does not do justice to all of the Korean men involved, for many of them came from middle class families and had a good educational background. The media portrayal of guest workers as poor folk who arrive with ox carts seeking work to sustain their families seems to fit the popular image of many guest workers who came to Germany. Often they were perceived as being backward and ignorant and therefore in need of work.

The Korean miners were selected from a large pool of applicants, and they were examined for health problems and their record checked to make sure they had no criminal past. Once in Germany, they immediately started work, but mining turned out to be more physically demanding than many had anticipated. Some were injured during work and went home. One Korean man is quoted saying that they had become victims of exploitation and that the hard work was too much for their Asian bodies:

Sie wurden gefeuert, weil sie den Anforderungen nicht gewachsen waren. Mancher auch kehrte als Versehrter heim, wie Choi Kil Young, der seinen linken Mittelfinger verlor. „Sie sind Opfer der Ausbeutung“, behauptet nun der Koreaner Lee Samuel, Sozialberater der evangelischen Kirche in Bochum – in dessen Heimatland Elendsberichte erscheinen, als hätten hierzulande die Kohle-Barone noch immer das Sagen. „Viel Schweiß und Blut“ werde vergossen, so schrieb unter Pseudonym ein koreanischer Bergmann für die Monatszeitschrift „Choong Ang“, die Maloche sei „für unsere asiatischen Körper“ zu hart. (*Der Spiegel*, Br. 15/1980)

(They were fired because they weren't able to fulfill expectations. Some returned home disabled, such as Choi Kil Young, who lost his middle finger. "They are victims of exploitation," claims the Korean Lee Samuel, social worker of the Protestant Church in Bochum – in whose home country reports of misery appear as if in this country coal barons still ruled. "A lot of blood and sweat" was shed, wrote a Korean coal miner for the monthly magazine "Choong Ang," and that the work was "for our Asian bodies" too hard.)

The author of this article takes an appropriately distanced stance toward the Korean interviewees' criticisms, but the comment that the Koreans reported back to Korea about their negative work situation in Germany as if coal barons were still ruling seems to

suggest that the Korean's criticism is somehow not true. The one Korean man's claim that the work was too hard for their "Asian bodies," probably also resonated with a German readership conditioned to the media's focus on differences between Germans and guest workers. The German managers are portrayed as having felt equally disappointed, which seems understandable. They claim that they do not have as many problems with migrant guest worker groups as with the Koreans and add that the Muslim Turks are at least "predictable" in their work, implying that the Koreans are "unpredictable." The article also implies that the "Asians" (as opposed to the Europeans?) call in sick more often than anyone else. Insensitively, the author of this article goes on to compare the situation in the mines to the Korean War, not the Korean civil war but a war against Koreans:

Ausgenutzt fühlten sich indessen auch die Zechen-Herren, so Alfons von Bronk, Personalchef der Ruhrkohle AG (RAG): „Wir haben mit unseren koreanischen Gästen so viele Probleme, wie mit keiner anderen Nationalität.“ Mal fuhr eine Gruppe [...] nicht ein, weil sie gegen die Entlassung eines Landsmannes protestierte; mal drohten deutsche Kumpel, wie eine RAG-Vorstandsmitglied berichtet, das Gezähe hinzuschmeißen, weil es im Streik wieder Zoff unter den Asiaten gab: „Da lob ich mir unsere Türken.“ Die Moslems seien wenigstens bei der Arbeit kalkulierbar, dagegen ist „keiner so oft krank wie die Koreaner“, klagt Bronk, „auf manchen Zechen fehlten bisweilen bis zu 70 Prozent“. Im Durchschnitt ist der Krankenstand der 20- bis 35jährigen Koreaner (Dezember 1979: 27,15 Prozent) noch ein Drittel höher als bei den über 50jährigen Deutschen (18,57 Prozent). Wie immer man es betrachtet: In jeder Beziehung ist Korea-Krieg auf den bundesdeutschen Zechen. (*Der Spiegel*, Br. 15/1980)

(The coal mine owners feel equally exploited says Alfons von Bronk, Human Resources director of Ruhrkohle AG (RAG): "We have more problems with our Korean guests than with any other nationality." Once a group didn't go down because they were protesting the firing of a countryman; another time German fellows threatened to throw down their tools because of fights again among the Asians, as a RAG member of the executive board reports: "I like our Turks." The Muslims are at least predictable, whereas "no one gets sick as often as the Koreans" complains Bronk, "in some coal mines there are up to 70% missing." On average, the sick cases are a third higher among the 20-to-35-year-old Koreans (December 1979: 27.15%) than among the over 50-year-old Germans (18.57%). However one sees it: There is a Korean war in German coal mines in every way.)

This article also comments on the fact that the majority of Korean men who were hired as miners were in fact not miners, despite the official labor contract:

Aber „bis auf eine Handvoll“ (Bronk) sind die Koreaner geblieben, was sie waren: Neubergleute. Kein Wunder allerdings, denn entgegen der politischen Abrede kam da aus Korea alles mögliche, nur selten Bergleute. (*Der Spiegel*, Br. 15/1980)

(‘But “except for a handful” (Bronk) the Koreans remained what they were: Inexperienced coal miners. No wonder, because despite the political agreement everything imaginable arrived from Korea, but rarely coal miners.’)

The Korean men are described as short and obviously weak. On top of that they are said to complain about their difficulties with adjusting to and acculturating in Germany:

Die kleinwüchsigen und offenbar anfälligen Koreaner haben nicht nur Geldsorgen; sie klagen vor allem über Anpassungsschwierigkeiten, für die zunächst „jeder Verständnis hat“ (Bronk). (*Der Spiegel*, Br. 15/1980)

(The dwarfish and apparently fragile Koreans not only have money worries; they complain about acculturation problems for which in the beginning everyone shows understanding.)

The author stresses that anyone would understand and accept the fact that the guest workers from Korea have to deal with culture shock and acculturation. He makes it clear, however, that the Koreans had their fair share of understanding from the Germans, and yet they still complain about acculturation problems. Moreover, they are said to barely manage to produce the minimum amount of coal at work, and yet they apparently feel underpaid. Their German colleagues do not agree with them and will not pay attention to their complaints, as the article states:

Die Koreaner schaffen nicht einmal die Mindestmenge, vom Akkord ganz zu schweigen – aber sie fühlen sich dennoch unterbezahlt. Die Deutschen wiederum wollen davon nichts hören. Kein anderer Kumpel werde es hinnehmen, so Peter Heinrich, Betriebsrat auf Ewald, „wenn die Koreaner ein gesondertes Gedinge bekämen“. (*Der Spiegel*, Br. 15/1980)

(The Koreans don’t even manage the minimum amount, not to mention the task

work – and yet they feel underpaid. The Germans, however, don't want to hear about it. No fellow would put up with it, if "the Koreans got special treatment" says Peter Heinrich, work council at Ewald.)

Interestingly, the Korean men also apparently get sick more often the longer they have been in the country. One administrative member is, thus, grateful that the "Korean adventure" of recruiting miners from Korea will come to an end quickly:

Auffälliger ist in der Tat, daß sich die Koreaner um so anfälliger zeigen, je länger sie in der Bundesrepublik sind. Im ersten Jahr sind durchschnittlich 6,6 Prozent, im zweiten schon 15,8 Prozent krank; im dritten, wenn es denn erreicht wird, ist jeder vierte koreanische Arbeiter ein Kranker. Derzeit sind noch 600 Südkoreaner im Revier beschäftigt, aber sie werden wohl die letzten sein. Neue Kumpels aus dem Fernen Osten sollen nicht mehr angeworben werden; das „koreanische Abenteuer“, sagt Vorstand Gentz erleichtert, sei nun bald vorbei. (*Der Spiegel*, Br. 15/1980)

(It is quite obvious that the Koreans appear to be more susceptible to illness the longer they have been in Germany. During the first year, there are, on average, 6.6% of the time sick, in the second year already 15.8%; in the third year, if they make it, every fourth Korean worker is sick. At present, there are still 600 South-Koreans employed but those will probably be the last. New fellows from the Far East won't get recruited any more; the "Korean adventure" is soon to be over, says executive member Gentz.)

In 2000, the article "Deutscher geworden: Vor vierzig Jahren wurden die ersten Koreaner für deutsche Bergwerke angeworben" showed a different Korean-German experience. Much like the article discussed earlier about the guest workers' fear of loneliness this article offered a more sensitive view of Koreans in Germany. Indeed, it allowed Korean voices to be heard on why they came to Germany:

Da sich die südkoreanische Militärregierung im Ausland nicht blamieren wollte, mußten alle, die nach Deutschland wollten, zunächst ihr Allgemeinwissen beweisen. Von den tausend Bewerbern, die sich in Seoul zum Prüfungsverfahren meldeten, bestand nur jeder fünfte. So kam es, daß sich die erste Gruppe koreanischer Hilfskräfte für den deutschen Bergbau nicht etwa aus gestandenen Grubenarbeitern, sondern zu einem guten Teil aus Akademikern rekrutierte. „Viele waren Ingenieure, Lehrer und Offiziere“, erinnert sich Kim

Yeoung-Tek. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Nr. 67, 20.03.2002, S. 11)  
(Because the South Korean military regime did not want to lose face abroad, everyone who wanted to go to Germany had to first prove their general knowledge. Of the thousand applicants who registered in Seoul for the examination, only every fifth man passed. Thus, the first group of Korean work help for the German coal mining industry consisted to a large extent of academics and not experienced miners. “Many were engineers, teachers and officers,” remembers Kim Yeoung-Tek.)

The men tell that they had tried to work hard and be disciplined, in order to strengthen the reputation of Korea in Germany. The Korean embassy is even said to have sent ambassadors once in a while to remind the Korean men of their duty and responsibility to work hard:

„Wir haben hier wirklich hart und diszipliniert gearbeitet“, sagt Kim. „Einerseits wurde nach Akkord bezahlt, aber wir wollten auch das Beste für das Ansehen der Heimat geben.“ Um den patriotischen Eifer nicht erlahmen zu lassen, sandte die südkoreanische Botschaft in Bonn immer wieder Kontrolleure aus. Diese hielten den Landsleuten vor, welche hohe Verantwortung sie trügen und daß es nur von ihrer Leistung abhing, ob weitere Koreaner kommen dürften. Der moralische Druck, beteuert Kim, sei so stark gewesen, daß man Krankheiten und kleinere Arbeitsunfälle verschwiegen habe, um nicht negativ aufzufallen. (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* Nr. 67, 20.03.2002, S. 11)

(“We worked really hard and disciplined here,” says Kim. “While we were paid per task work, we wanted to give our best for the reputation of our country.” The South Korean embassy in Bonn kept sending controllers in order to keep up the patriotic motivation. They reminded their countrymen of their high responsibility and, depending on their success, more Koreans would be allowed to come. The moral pressures, assures Kim, were so high that people hid sickness and minor accidents so as not to cause trouble.)

The students in my courses were able to analyze the excerpts above with some guidance and background information from me, and they discovered that language choice in media reports influenced how guest workers were perceived and how images of the “good” and the “bad” guest worker were created. They also found that language usage became more sensitive and less discriminatory with each decade of news reports. After three class meetings dedicated to analyzing these excerpts, the students came to the

conclusion that, while media reports on the Korean miners were in general less positive than those on Korean women, the attitude toward the Korean men changed in the way it did toward other guest workers. It seems that gender may have played a significant role in how these migrants were perceived and treated. Female migrants may have had to deal with exoticism and infantilization, but male migrants received harsher, less welcoming media coverage and were objectified and exoticized, too. Since 2000, however, media reports seem to address migration issues in Germany more carefully and present a more generally favorable picture of migrants. No doubt, such considerate coverage will help ease integration issues for the second and third generations.

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