Sociolinguists of globalization have recently adopted the metaphor of scales to develop a more dynamic and relational orientation to the mobility of codes across time and space (Blommaert, 2010). However, in many applications of this metaphor, scales are used in hierarchical and stratified terms. Privileged varieties of ”native” English are treated as belonging to a translocal scale, enabling mobility across different times and spaces. Local English varieties are treated as low mobility resources belonging to situated spaces and limited time scales. Though this mode of application brings out the role of power in determining the uptake of codes and statuses of people in migration, it also overlooks more complex ways in which scales are invoked by people across contact zones to renegotiate language norms and status differences. This paper reports on a study of African professional migrants in English-dominant countries. The subjects considered communication in these contact zones as a ”two-way street,” where both parties have to co-construct their norms. The outcome depends on the way scales are negotiated. While some participants in the host community invoke a colonial time scale and nation-state spatial orientation to insist on native varieties of English, others adopt a post-colonial time scale and contact zone orientation to accommodate the Englishes spoken by migrant professionals and co-construct new norms that facilitate intelligibility and communicative success. Often, migrant professionals adopt creative and agentive strategies to change the scales adopted to facilitate more inclusive norms that make spaces for their own language resources. The paper argues that complementing scales analysis with an orientation to De Certeau’s notion of ”tactics” will help understand the possibility of voice for migrants in contact zones.

Keywords: scales, tactics, mobility.