This paper argues that it is important to examine social actors’ complex and conflicting desires and motivations for acquiring or learning “desirable” languages as it is through such seemingly personal and mundane feelings that social structures are reproduced and that individuals’ situated agencies are realized. Social actors’ desires and motivations are complex and conflicting precisely because they are multiply constructed and differently and differentially positioned within the social structure (Ortner, 2006; Sewell, 2005). On the one hand, this arrangement can be seen as limiting with the constraints of structure inevitably shaping the things that people can imagine and desire, but on the other hand, this complexity that social structure makes possible, allows people to have the situated agency to imagine and desire alternative ways of meaning and being. Using this argument, this paper focuses on two groups of mobile workers: call center agents and transnational domestic workers from the Philippines. Their mobility is publicly constructed as being dependent on their having a ‘desirable’ language: English. Using data from in-depth interviews, this paper examines how the different subjectivities of the workers shape what they consider to be ‘desirable’ and ‘undesirable’ language. By putting an emphasis on what both groups consider to be ‘undesirable’ language this paper hopes to shed light on the common underlying discourses that shape their desires and how the workers use the tension between what is ‘desirable’ and ‘undesirable’ to construct their own notion of a ‘mobile’ English. This ‘mobile’ English appears to be qualified by three criteria: (1) it is linguistically functional, (2) it does not index one particular place and (3) it is authentic.

Keywords: mobility, desire, agency.