Pretty darn amazing, pretty awesome or just *pretty good*?
From compromiser to booster and beyond –
pretty and its adjectival collocates in Englishes world-wide

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Among the most prominent means of intensifying in English are amplifiers modifying adjectives. For the past few decades, *very* (1)*, really* (2) and *so* (3) seem to have shared the top slots in terms of relative frequency. *Pretty* (4) is a relative newcomer, mostly associated with American English (Biber et al. 1999).

(1) when they're going off to relax in their **_very_ nice** cottages in the countryside (GloWbE GH G)

(2) It makes you feel **_really_ cool** and powerful! (GloWbE AU G)

(3) **_So_ glad** this collection has been preserved . (GloWbE US B)

(4) and im **_pretty_ sure** you hav no proof at all that the earth is 4.3b years old? (GloWbE *sic*; HK G)

Pretty is particularly interesting because it oscillates between compromiser and booster meaning, with different varieties displaying different preferences. Based on the top 50 *pretty+* adjective 2-grams (115,000+ tokens), this paper uses data from GloWbE (Davies 2013) to contrast and compare six major English-speaking regions (US, GB, Australia/New Zealand, Indian subcontinent, South East Asia, Africa) with regard to

a) distributional preferences concerning the use of *pretty* (also vis-à-vis top 10 intensifiers for each region)

b) preferred *pretty*+adjective pairs

c) collostructional/collexeme status (Gries & Stefanowitch 2004)

d) the impact of adjective frequency on *pretty*+adjective collexeme status.

The results show that varieties behave very differently concerning the current state of development of *pretty*: first, varieties behave far from homogeneously concerning their typical *pretty* 2-grams; second, L2 varieties – while generally lagging behind concerning the adoption of *pretty* as a booster – are sharing overall preferences with L1 varieties concerning outliers (chiefly among them *pretty good*). Overall, *pretty* as a compromiser is still much more common in L2 varieties generally, while boosting *pretty* is a hallmark of L1 varieties in general and the US in particular.