Variation with *amn’t* is explained by productivity, not competition

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This talk is concerned with ``the amn’t gap,'' which refers to the absence of a negated form for the finite auxiliary *am* in most varieties of English. Bresnan (2001) notes that while the gap is persistent in the varieties of North America and England, things are interestingly different in Irish and Scots: in Irish English, *amn’t* may be used in all syntactic contexts, and in Scots it may be used in inversion contexts ("amn't I coming with you") but not in declaratives ("I amn't coming with you"). Using new data from the Scots Syntax Atlas, I show that the empirical picture in Scotland is more complex and develop an account of dialectal variation with *amn’t* in terms of Yang’s (2016, 2017) Tolerance Principle, where it is the productivity of the negative affixation rule which is crucial.