What morphological form can tell us about syntactic structure: two analyses of associative plurals

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1 Introduction

Associative plurals (APs) involve a noun—always human-denoting and most often a proper name or kinship term—and an 'associative marker' (AM) (Moravcsik 1994, Corbett 2000).[1] The meaning of the AP is 'X and X's associates'. Examples of APs cross-linguistically are given in (1-4): in Malayalam (1) the AM is the word *okke*, 'all' (Asher and Kumari 1997); in Belep (2) the AM is *-ma* (from Proto-Oceanic *MA.4, 'and/with' (Mauri and Sansò 2019)); (3) and (4) show APs in Japanese and Turkish where the AMs, *-tachi* and *-lAr*, are identical to the ordinary plural.

(1) Raaman **okke**
Ram all
'Ram and associates'
(Daniel and Moravcsik 2013)

(2) Teâ Polo-**ma**
Teâ Polo-AND
'Teâ Polo and his people'
(Mauri and Sansò 2019)

(3) Mika-**tachi**-ga
Mika-PL-NOM
'Mika and her family/friends' AP
'Multiple people called Mika' PL
(Nakanishi and Ritter 2008)

(4) Ahmet-**ler**
Ahmet-PL
'Ahmet and his family/friends' AP
'Multiple people called Ahmet' PL
(Göskel and Kerslake 2005)

This paper is concerned with the kind of AP in (3-4) where the AM is identical to the ordinary plural. This kind of AP—which I will call the *plural pattern*—is found in 95 languages that I have surveyed (the language list is given in the appendix). The other type of AP (1-2), where the AM is *not* the same as the ordinary plural, is also well-attested cross-linguistically.[2] I will call this the *non-plural pattern*. The goal of this paper is to show that these two morphological patterns correspond to two distinct syntactic derivations. In doing so, I show that the *plural pattern* is not found in an arbitrary group of languages. Instead, all *plural pattern* languages share another property: they either have affixal definite articles or lack definite articles. This means that identity between the AM and the ordinary plural is not an accident, but is dependent on the article status of the language. I propose a new analysis of *plural pattern* languages that captures this. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 establishes the novel typological generalization. Section 3 offers a new analysis of *plural pattern* languages and deduces the generalization. In Section 4 I turn to an unresolved puzzle regarding certain *plural pattern* languages—the AP is ungrammatical with plural possessor

*I would particularly like to thank Željko Bošković, Adrian Stegovec and Andrea Calabrese for their comments and guidance on this work. I would also like to thank my informants—Hande Svegi, Burak Oney, Aliyar Ozercan, András Bárány, Réka Stüber, Ognyan Darinov, Ivan Derzhanski and Yoshiki Fujiwara—for their judgments and the audience at PLC 46 for their insightful feedback.

[1] Anthropomorphized animals in stories have also been reported; see also Daniel (2020).

[2] 95 out of 199 languages for Daniel and Moravcsik (2013); 80 languages for Mauri and Sansò (2019).

agreement. I show that under the analysis to be proposed this puzzle receives a straightforward explanation. Section 5 concludes.

2 The *plural pattern*: A typological generalization

I have collected a sample of 95 languages with APs that show the *plural pattern*. These languages span 27 distinct language families, 4 creoles/pidgins and 1 isolate (see Appendix). Interestingly, all of these languages either have affixal definite articles or lack definite articles (i.e. none have free-standing definite articles). We then have the following generalization.

(5) **Generalization**: All languages that show the *plural pattern* lack free-standing definite articles (they have affixal definite articles or lack definite articles).

Before establishing the generalization it is necessary to define a definite article for our purposes. Following Bošković (2016), a definite article is a unique definite element, such that it is distinct from demonstratives and occurs once per noun phrase, and has roughly the meaning of the iota-operator (i.e. it yields an argument of type e (Chierchia 1998)).We've already seen that Japanese and Turkish, two articleless languages, show the *plural pattern*. In fact, a number of Turkic languages—all of which lack definite articles (Johanson 1998)—show the *plural pattern* (Gagauz, Kumyk, Karachay-Balkar, Crimean Tatar, Mishar Tatar, Bashkir, Kazakh, Uzbek, Uyghur, Tofa, Chuvash). The *plural pattern* is attested in Indo-European (IE) too (Bulgarian, Hindi, Nepali, Ossetic, Panjabi, Polish, Serbo-Croatian, Sinhala, Slovenian). Sinhala and Bulgarian have affixal definite articles and the rest lack definite articles.[3] Strong confirmation of (5) comes from Afrikaans, an IE language with a free-standing definite article and an AP. Significantly, Afrikaans shows the *non-plural pattern* (the AM is the 3PL pronoun and the ordinary plural is *-s* or *-e*).

(6) a. my suster-**hulle**
my sister-they
'my sister and her family'

b. suster-**s**
sister-PL
'sisters (Donaldson 1993:50,69)

Other particularly compelling evidence for (5) comes from comparing Margi and Kotoko, two Afro-Asiatic languages with APs. Margi has an affixal definite article (Hoffman 1963) and shows the *plural pattern*; both the ordinary plural and the AM are *=yar* (Dryer 2007, Daniel and Moravcsik 2013). Kotoko has a free-standing definite article (Allison 2012) and an AP. Crucially, Kotoko shows the *non-plural pattern* (the AM is the 3PL pronoun and the ordinary plural is *-é*).

(7) Bàshir- **yàr**
Bashir- PL
'Bashir and his family'

(8) a. **en** yá
3PL mother
'mother (and her people)'

b. yá- **é**
mother- PL
'mothers'
(Allison 2012:75,107)

Alamblak, a Sepik language, also confirms the generalization. Consider first two articleless Sepik languages, Awtuw (Feldmen 1986) and Manambu (Aikhenvald 2008). The ordinary plural and the AM in Awtuw is *-wom* (9); the ordinary plural (on kinship terms) and the AM in Manambu is *-bər* (10). On the other hand, Alamblak has a free-standing definite article (Bruce 1984) and shows the *non-plural pattern* (the AM is the 3PL pronoun and the ordianry plural is *-m*, (11)).

[3] See e.g. Riccardi (2003) (Nepali); Abaev (1964) (Iron Ossetic); Erschler (2019) (Digor Ossetic).

(9) Altiy-**wom**
Altiy-PL
'Altiy and others'
(Feldmen 1986:40,118)

(10) Tanina-**bər**
Tanina-PL
'Tanina and whoever is with her.'
(Aikhenvald 2008:130-2)

(11) a. Yoni **rëm**
Yoni 3PL
'Yoni and his associates'
(Mauri and Sansó 2017:2)

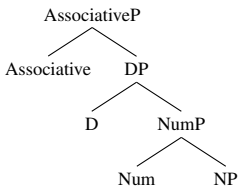
b. fëh-**m**
pig-PL
'pigs'
(Bruce 1984:98)

Thus, the ordinary plural and the AM being identical correlates with another aspect of the nominal domain in the relevant languages, namely the absence of a free-standing definite article.[4] This paper will provide an analysis of the *plural pattern* that captures this. Specifically, I will argue that the two morphological patterns found in APs have distinct syntactic derivations.

3 Deriving the (non-)plural pattern

Previous work on APs posits that the AM realizes the head of a distinct functional projection high in the nominal spine responsible for the associative interpretation of the noun (e.g. Li 1999, Nakanishi and Ritter 2008, Görgülü 2011, Dékány 2011, Cinque 2018), as in (12a). I call this FP AssociativeP. Under these approaches, the syntactic representation of an AP in a *non-plural pattern* language like Malayalam (1) is (12b) and in a *plural pattern* language like Japanese (3) is (12c), where the respective AMs realize the head of AssociativeP (note both languages are head final). Crucially, this means that the AM *-tachi* in (12c) is distinct from—but syncretic with—the ordinary plural *-tachi*, which expones a plural Num head (12d).

(12) a.

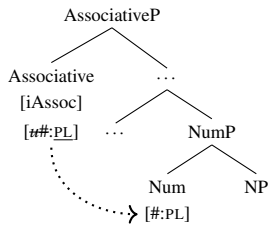


b. [$_{\text{AssociativeP}}$ [$_{\text{DP}}$ [$_{\text{NumP}}$ [$_{\text{NP}}$ **Raaman**] Num] D] Assoc **okke**]
c. [$_{\text{AssociativeP}}$ [$_{\text{DP}}$ [$_{\text{NumP}}$ [$_{\text{NP}}$ **Mika**] Num] D] Assoc **-tachi**]
d. [$_{\text{DP}}$ [$_{\text{NumP}}$ [$_{\text{NP}}$ **Mika**] Num **-tachi**] D]

This paper argues that the AM *-tachi* and the ordinary plural *-tachi* are not distinct. Instead, the AM is the realization of the Num head in a high syntactic position. I propose that in all *plural pattern* languages, Num^0 moves to Associative^0 where it is pronounced (and interpreted, see below). This movement is triggered by an unvalued [#] feature on Associative^0. [*u*#:__] probes for a matching valued [#] feature and finds it on Num^0 (13). Following Nevins (2007) I assume that plural and dual number are featurally represented on Num^0 but that singular is the absence of number features.

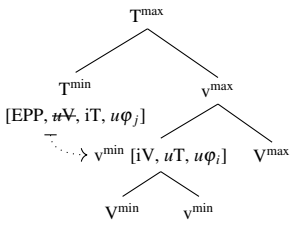
[4]Daniel and Moravcsik's (2013) sample of APs lists Fulfulde (Adamawa), Tariana, Mupun, Awtuw, Margi, Lepcha, Bambara, Koyroboro Senni, Sango, Wichí, Gooniyandi, Kanuri, Chamorro, and Malagasy as having free-standing definite articles and showing the *plural pattern*. If correctly characterized, these languages would be the type of language I claim doesn't exist. However, they are mistakenly characterized. Fulfulde, Tariana, Awtuw, Sango, Gooniyandi and Bambara do not have overt definite articles; see Taylor (1921) (Fulfulde), Aikhenvald (2003) (Tariana), Feldmen (1986) (Awtuw), Pasch (1996) (Sango), McGregor (1990) (Gooniyandi), Bird et al. (1977) (Bambara). Margi, Lepcha and Koyraboro Senni have affixal articles; see Hoffman (1963) (Margi), Plaisier (2006) (Lepcha), Heath (1999) (Koyraboro Senni). Kanuri and Wichí use the collective morpheme as the AM, not the ordinary plural; see Hutchinson (1981) (Kanuri), Terraza and Baito (2014) (Wichí). Malagasy, Chamorro and Mupun nouns do not inflect for plurality, hence are irrelevant to (5).

(13)

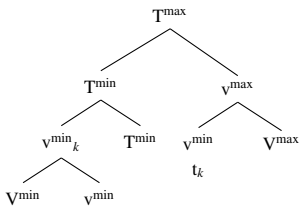


I adopt Roberts's (2010) approach to head movement where X^0 moves to Y^0 iff X^0 is a deficient goal for Y^0 (a deficient goal is one whose formal features are a proper subset of the probe's formal features). To see how his analysis works consider (14), involving v-V to T movement—v bears [iV], [*u*T] and [*uφ*] features and T bears [*u*V], [iT], [u*φ*] and an EPP feature. [*u*V] on T probes for a goal, finding [iV] on v (14a). Because v is a deficient goal, v incorporates into T (14b).

(14) a.

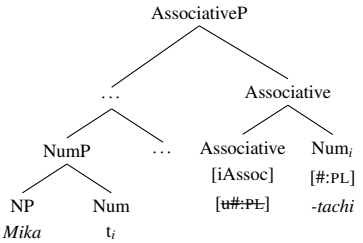


b.



Returning now to the AP (13), Associative^0 bears a categorial feature [iAssoc] and [*u*#], and Num^0 bears [#:PL]. [*u*#:__] on Associative^0 probes and is valued by [#:PL] on Num^0. Importantly, Num^0 is a deficient goal and thus must incorporate into Associative^0. Now consider the syntactic representation of the e.g. Japanese AP in (3) under this approach; the AM *-tachi* is not *syncretic* with the ordinary plural in Num, the AM *is* Num (cf. (15) and (12c)). In essence, I claim that the AP interpretation in *plural pattern* languages comes about because Num^0 takes scope from a high position, over a referential argument (instead of a predicate).

(15)



In *non-plural pattern* languages, I propose the AM is base-generated in Associative^0 in line with Cinque (2018). I will discuss a *non-plural pattern* language in Section 4. The next section shows how a movement-based approach to the *plural pattern* deduces the typological generalization that such languages always lack free-standing definite articles.

3.1 Deducing the generalization: The NP/DP typology

I have proposed that the *plural pattern* doesn't involve accidential syncretism of two morphemes, but is instead the realization of a single morpheme in two positions—one high, one low. The question now is how this rules out the *plural pattern* in languages with free-standing definite articles. The answer lies in another typological generalization established by Bošković (2008, 2012, 2016):

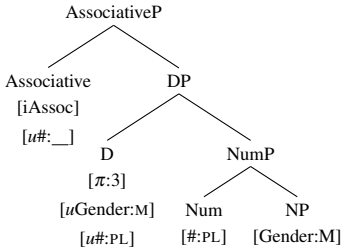
(16) **The NP/DP typology**
Languages with definite articles project DP but articleless languages lack it.

(16) is meant to capture the fact that languages with definite articles behave differently from articleless languages in a number of syntactic/semantic properties (some are given in (17)). The definite article is then not null (i.e. a PF phenomenon) because PF differences shouldn't have syntactic or semantic effects.

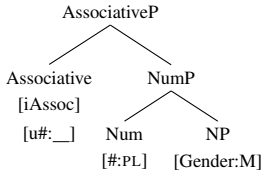
(17) a. Only languages with articles allow the majority reading of MOST.
b. Only languages without articles may allow scrambling.
c. Only languages with articles may allow clitic doubling.
d. Obligatory numeral classifier systems are found only in languages without articles.

Applying the NP/DP typology to the AP, languages with free-standing definite articles project DP between Associative^0 and Num^0 while articleless languages don't. Additionally, following Danon (2011), I assume D bears a valued [$i\pi$] φ-feature and unvalued [uGender] and [u#] φ-features; D's $u\varphi$-features are valued by distinct heads within the nominal (N and Num respectively) so that D is φ-complete. Thus, (18a-b) are the tree structures for an AP with and without the DP layer.

(18) a. Free-standing definite articles:



b. No definite articles:



Crucially, when D is projected between Associative^0 and Num^0 it is an intervenor for movement: D^0 is an element of the same structural type as Num^0 (a head) that c-commands Num^0 and bears the feature that Associative^0 attracts ([#]). Moving Num^0 to Associative^0 across D^0 is thus a violation of Relativized Minimality (Rizzi 1990). Recall that the AP interpretation arises due to Num^0 taking scope over a referential argument. When Num^0 is blocked from moving, the AP interpretation can't be generated. Num^0 is blocked from moving when D/DP is projected, thus ruling out the *plural pattern* in languages with free-standing definite articles, as desired.[5]

But what about affixal article languages? In the generalization established in this paper, affixal article languages behave like articleless languages in allowing the *plural pattern* but according to Bošković, all languages with definite articles (including affixal ones) project DP. However, affixal article languages have been shown to behave like articleless languages in some contexts (e.g. Reuland 2011, Dubinsky and Tasseva-Kurktchieva 2014, Talić 2017, Oda 2022). Talić (2017) in particular argues, based on a broad range of cross-linguistic evidence, that affixal article languages

[5]Num^0 could also be blocked from moving to Associative^0 under Chomsky's (2000) Phase Impenetrability Condition since DP is a phase. Under this approach, Associative^0 cannot establish an agree relation with Num^0 because Num^0 has been sent to the interfaces (because it is in the complement domain of a phase head); without Agree, the conditions for movement in Roberts (2010) are not met.

don't project DP when the article is absent (see also Oda 2022). Thus, in an affixal article language like Komi-Permyak that shows the *plural pattern*, (19) doesn't contain a DP layer because there is no definite article. Num^0 then moves to Associative^0 without violating Relativized Minimality.

(19) Ivanov-vez — Komi-Permyak
Ivanov-PL
'Ivan and those with him' — (Daniel and Moravcsik 2013)

Strong confirmation of the current approach comes from Bulgarian, an affixal article language that allows the definite article with proper names and some kinship terms in the possessive. In Bulgarian, an AP can be formed with *kaka*, 'elder sister'; the AM is the plural possessive marker *-ini* (20a).[6] *Kakini* can also be suffixed with the definite article (20b). However, while *kakini-te* can mean 'my elder sister's friends/family' (excluding the elder sister), it cannot have the AP interpretation which must *include* the elder sister. In other words, the definite article (i.e. D/DP) blocks the AP reading, as the current approach predicts.

(20) a. Kak**in-i** mi oti-do-ha na ribo-lov.
elder.sister.POSS-PL 1.POSS go-PST-3PL to fish-hunt
'My elder sister and her friends went fishing.' — associative
'My elder sister's [friends] went fishing' — possessive

b. Kak**in-i-te** mi oti-do-ha na ribo-lov.
elder.sister.POSS-PL-DEF 1.POSS go-PST-3PL to fish-hunt
#'My elder sister and her friends went fishing.' — # associative
'My elder sister's [friends] went fishing' — possessive

(Daniel 2004, I. Derzhanski p.c)

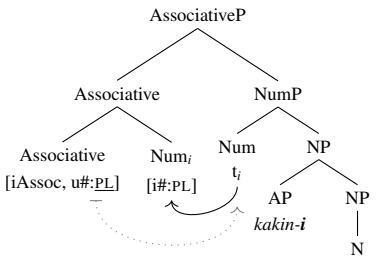
The next section turns to a puzzling property of certain *plural pattern* languages that has not been explained previously—certain *plural pattern* languages cannot form an AP with plural possessor agreement. I show that this too is an intervention effect and thus additional evidence for the movement-based approach.

4 Resolving a puzzle: the ban on plural possessor agreement

First noted by Bartos (1999) for Hungarian, the AP is ungrammatical with plural possessor agreement. I observe the same restriction in Turkish.[7] (21a-b) show APs in Hungarian and Turkish,

[6]The AP in Bulgarian (and other south Slavic languages) involves a possessive adjective. The structure for an AP in Bulgarian is given in (1). Num^0 moves to Associative^0 where it scopes from a high position. As the only overt element in the nominal, the morphological realization of plural number is on the possessive adjective.

(1)



[7]Note the restriction is against plural possessor *agreement* and not plural possessors generally. Japanese, a *plural pattern* language without possessor agreement, allows plural possessors with the AP (Y. Fujiwara, p.c.).

respectively, with the kin term 'elder sister' and singular possessor agreement. If the possessor agreement is changed to plural, the APs are ungrammatical (22a-b).[8]

(21) a. nővér {**-em** / **-ed** / **-é**} -é-k
sister {-1SG.P / -2SG.P / -3SG.P} -é-PL
my / your / his/her elder sister and her friends'

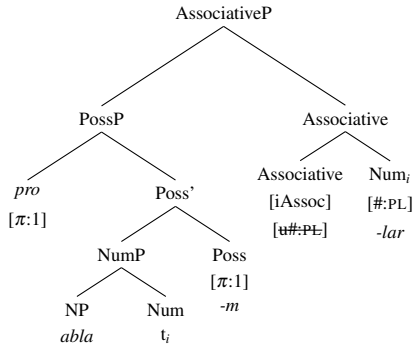
b. abla {**-m** / **-n**} -lar
elder.sister {-1SG.P / -2SG.P} -PL
'**my / your** elder sister and her friends'

(22) a. *nővér {**-ünk** / **-etek** / **-ük**} -é-k
sister {-1PL.P / -2PL.P / -3PL.P} -é-PL
'**our / your / their** elder sister and her friends'
(A. Bárány, R. Stüber p.c.)

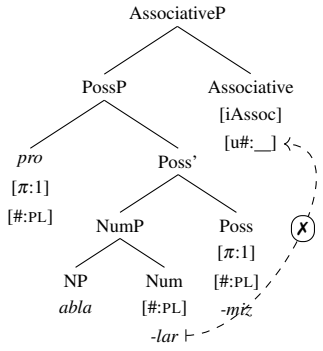
b. *abla {**-mız** / **-nız**} -lar
elder.sister {-1PL.P / -2PL.P} -PL
'**our / your** elder sister and her friends'
(H. Svegi, B. Oney, p.c.)

I assume possessor agreement involves the morphological realization of φ-features on a functional head Poss^0 that match an overt or covert *pro* possessor in Spec,PossP. Thus, the structure for (21b) with 1st person singular possesor agreement is (23); the noun heads NP, Num^0 has a plural [#] feature, Poss^0 has a 1st person φ-feature that matches the person feature of *pro* in Spec,PossP but no number feature (because it is singular) and Associative^0 has [iAssoc] and [*u*#:__] features. [*u*#:__] is valued by [#:PL] on Num^0 and Num^0 moves to Associative^0. On the other hand, (24) is the structure for the ungrammatical AP with 1st person *plural* possessor agreement in (22b). The initial structure is identical to (23) except for the fact that Poss^0 has a [#] feature in addition to a 1st person φ-feature. Crucially, the [#] feature on Poss^0 makes Poss^0 an intervenor for Num^0-Associative^0 movement; Num^0 cannot cross over a Poss head bearing a [#] feature because Poss^0 is a closer goal to Associative^0. Num^0 remains in its base position and the AP interpretation (and the correct morpheme order) is underivable. The same holds in Hungarian.[9]

(23) *abla-m-lar* =



(24) **abla-miz-lar* =



Before concluding I turn to an additional piece of evidence from Turkish that it is the *form* of the AM that matters here. In addition to the *plural pattern* AM, Turkish also has an AM that shows the *non-plural pattern*, *-gil* (Lewis 1967, Göskel and Kerslake 2005).

[8]There is a further restriction that Turkish APs are ungrammatical with 3rd person possessor agreement (both singular and plural, Kunduracı 2013). I leave this issue aside here.

[9]I treat Hungarian as a *plural pattern* language because I treat *-k* in *-ék* as the plural morpheme *-k* (but see Dékány (2011) for another view). Hungarian is sometimes considered a free-standing article language, which would make it a counterexample to the generalization. However, MacWhinney (1976) notes that the definite article behaves like a prefix, since it "undergoes a morphophonemic alteration that is dependent upon the shape of the beginning of a root." Oda (2022) also shows that Hungarian licenses reflexive anaphors and has compositional indeterminate pronouns (two properties of articleless languages and affixal article languages, but not free-standing article languages). Based on these findings I treat the definite article in Hungarian as affixal.

(25) Ahmet-**gil**
Ahmet-APL
'Ahmet and his family/friends' (Lewis 1967:65)

I assume that *-gil* is a distinct AM that is base-generated in the head of AssociativeP (à la Cinque 2018). Importantly, if the current approach is correct, an AP with *-gil* and plural possessor agreement should be acceptable in Turkish because the ban on plural possessor agreement is a relativized minimality effect—with the absence of movement in the *non-plural pattern*, no relativized minimality effect should arise. This is borne out (26).

(26) abla {**-mız / -nız**} -**gil**
elder.sister {-1PL.P / -2PL.P} -APL
'**our / your** elder sister and her friends' (B. Oney p.c.)

Such data is convincing evidence that the AMs in the *plural* and *non-plural* patterns of Turkish are, as I have argued, two different morphemes with two different syntactic derivations.

5 Conclusions

I have argued that two patterns of AM—*plural* and *non-plural*—are not derivationally identical; the *plural pattern* involves movement of a plural Num head to an Associative head high in the nominal domain, while the *non-plural pattern* involves base-generation of a distinct AM in Associative^0. The paper also established a novel typological generalization about APs: the *plural pattern* is never found in languages with free-standing definite articles. I argued that this is a relativized minimality effect—in languages with free-standing definite articles, which always project DP, D intervenes for Num^0-Associaitve^0 movement. I also provided an explanation for an unresolved puzzle that plural possessor agreement is disallowed in *plural pattern* languages. Under the current approach this, too, is an intervention effect; Num^0 cannot move across a Poss head that bears a [#] feature.

6 Appendix

1 Turkic: [1] Bashkir [2] Chuvash [3] Crimean Tatar [4] Evenki [5] Gagauz [6] Karachay-Balkar [7] Kazakh [8] Khalkha [9] Kumyk [10] Manchu [11] Mishar Tatar [12] Nanai [13] Tofa [14] Turkish [15] Udihe [16] Uyghur [17] Uzbek **2 East Caucasian:** [18] Aghul [19] Archi [20] Bagvalal [21] Lak [22] Lezgian [23] Rutul **3 Niger-Congo:** [24] Asante [25] Akan [26] Ewe [27] Fulfulde (Adamwara) [28] Fula (Mauritian) [29] Luganda [30] Luvale [31] Sango [32] Sesotho [33] Yoruba [34] Zulu **4 Afro-Asiatic:** [35] Margi **5 Tacanan:** [36] Araona **6 Chukotko-Kamchatkan:** [37] Chukchi [38] Alutor **7 Sepik:** [39] Awtuw [40] Manambu **8 Mande:** [41] Bambara [42] Kpelle [43] Mandinka **9 Sino-Tibetan** [44] Belhare [45] Burmese [46] Mandarin Chinese [47] Chantyal [48] Garo [49] Hayu [50] Lahu [51] Lepcha [52] Limbu [53] Magar [54] Newar (Dolakha) [55] Newar (Kathmandu) **10 Utu-Aztecan:** [56] Comanche **11 Cariban:** [57] Apalai [58] Hixkaryana **12 Japonic:** [59] Japanese [60] Yoron-Ryukyuan **13 Salishan:** [61] Kalispel **14 Uralic:** [62] Hungarian [63] Khanty [64] Komi-Permyak [65] Komi-Zyrian [66] Mari (Hill) [67] Moksha [68] Nganasan [69] Udmurt **15 Tucanoan:** [70] Tucano **16 Kadu:** [71] Krongo **17 Central Sudanic:** [72] Lugbara **18 Indo-European:** [73] Bulgarian [74] Hindi [75] Nepali [76] Ossetic [77] Panjabi [78] Polish [79] Serbo-Croatian [80] Sinhala [81] Slovenian **19 Pama-Nyungan:** [82] Ngiyambaa **20 Arawakan:** [83] Tariana **21 Northwest Caucasian:** [84] Kabardian **22 Tupian:** [85] Urubu-Kaapor **23 Songhay:** [86] Koyraboro Senni **24 Bunuban:** [87] Gooniyandi **25 Na-Dene:** [88] Koyuokon **26 Eskimo-Aleut:** [89] Central Alaskan Yup'ik **27 Austronesian:** [90] Mangap-Mbula **28 Creoles/Pidgins:** [91] Berbice Dutch Creole [92] Bislama [93] Mauritian Creole [94] Tok Pisin **27 Isolates:** [95] Ainu

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