

**AGREEMENT PATTERNS WITH THE NOUNS *NĀS* AND  
*ĤĀLAM* IN DAMASCUS ARABIC**  
**Patrones de concordancia de los nombres *nās* y *ĥālam* en el árabe de  
Damasco**

Carmen BERLINCHES RAMOS  
cberlin@unizar.es  
Universidad de Zaragoza

**Abstract:** This paper examines the agreement patterns with the controllers *nās* and *ĥālam* in Damascus Arabic, a question not yet thoroughly studied. The collective nature of these nouns allows two kinds of agreement: strict agreement in the plural and deflected agreement in the feminine singular. The analysis focuses on the variation between strict and deflected agreement, especially as regards semantic and pragmatic factors, and also the morphological structure of the targets. The study is synchronic and based on data collected in the capital of Syria, Damascus. It is divided into two main sections: the first analyzes target-related factors, including target type, word order, and distance; the second focuses on controller-related factors, including quantification, qualification, reflexivity, specificity, and definiteness. In recent years numerous studies on agreement have been conducted and they indicate parallels among different varieties of Arabic, but such studies mainly address non-human controllers. The results of the present study show a prevalence of strict agreement with the nouns *nās* and *ĥālam*. Target type is a key factor in determining the kind of agreement, with distance between controller and target also being important. In line with previous studies, variation in agreement is closely connected to the controller's degree of individualization or collectivity as perceived by the speaker, who ultimately chooses which kind of agreement to use.

**Resumen:** Este artículo examina los patrones de concordancia de los nombres *nās* y *ĥālam* en árabe de Damasco, una cuestión aún no estudiada en profundidad. El sentido colectivo de ambos términos controladores permite la concordancia en femenino singular o en masculino plural, por lo que se analiza esta variación atendiendo a factores semánticos y pragmáticos, así como a la estructura morfológica de los términos controlados. La perspectiva del estudio es sincrónica y está basada en un corpus de textos recogidos en Damasco. Se divide en dos partes: (1) Factores relacionados con el término controlado (tipología; posición en la oración; distancia con respecto al término controlador). (2) Factores relacionados con el término controlador (cuantificación; cualificación; reflexividad; especificación; determinación). Asimismo, los estudios sobre la concordancia, particularmente prolíficos en los últimos años, han permitido trazar paralelismos con otras variedades árabes. Los resultados muestran una mayor frecuencia de concordancia en plural. Además, la tipología del término controlador es un factor relevante en la concordancia, así como una cierta distancia entre controlador y controlado. Por último, y de acuerdo con estudios anteriores, la variación en la concordancia está estrechamente relacionada con el grado de individualidad o colectividad del controlador percibido por el hablante quién, en última instancia elige el tipo de concordancia.

**Key words:** Arabic dialectology. Agreement. *Nās* and *ĥālam*. Damascus Arabic.

**Palabras clave:** Dialectología árabe. Concordancia. *Nās* y *ʕālam*. Árabe de Damasco.  
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### 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

The term *agreement* commonly refers to some systematic covariance between a semantic or formal property of one element and a formal property of another<sup>2</sup>. Among these two elements, the *controller* determines the agreement (say the subject noun phrase) and the *target* is the element whose form is determined by agreement<sup>3</sup>. In Arabic, the agreement of the target with its controller may be of two types: *strict*, if some category that is overtly inherently present in the controller (subject or head-noun) and copied in the target (verb, noun-modifier), and *deflected*, if a plural controller is associated with a feminine singular target<sup>4</sup>. Belnap's study on Cairene Arabic<sup>5</sup> demonstrated that variation with human controllers is far more extensive in his interviews than the literature would generally lead one to suspect<sup>6</sup>. Although human nouns tend to favor plural agreement, the case of *nās* and *ʕālam*, both meaning "people", must be considered apart, because being the most generic terms used to refer to human beings, they have an implicit collective sense<sup>7</sup> and therefore both kinds of

1. Damascus Arabic phoneme inventory: 1. Consonants. 1.1. Occlusive: *ʔ* laryngeal, voiceless; *b* bilabial, voiced; *ʙ* bilabial, velarized, voiced; *t* dental, voiceless; *d* dental, voiced; *ɟ* dental, velarized, voiceless; *ɗ* dental, velarized, voiced; *k* postpalatal, voiceless; *q* uvular, voiceless; *g* postpalatal, voiceless. 1.2. Fricative: *f* labiodental, voiceless; *v* labiodental, voiced; *x* velar, voiceless; *ɣ* velar, voiced; *h* laryngeal, voiceless; *ħ* pharyngeal, voiceless; *ʕ* pharyngeal, voiced. 1.3. Sibilant: *s* alveolar, voiceless; *z* alveolar, voiced; *ʃ* alveolar, velarized, voiceless; *ʒ* alveolar, velarized, voiced; *ʂ* prepalatal, voiceless; *ʐ* prepalatal, voiced. 1.4. Nasal: *m* bilabial, voiced; *n* dental, voiced. 1.5. Lateral: *l* alveolar, voiced; *ɭ* alveolar, velarized, voiced. 1.6. Trill: *r* alveolar, voiced. 2. Semivowels: *w* bilabial, voiced; *y* palatal, voiced. 3. Vowels. 3.1. Short vowels: *a* front, low; *e* front, mid; *ə* central, mid; *i* front, high; *o* back, mid; *u* back, high. 3.2. Long vowels: *ā* front, low; *ē* front, mid; *ī* front, high; *ō* back, mid; *ū* back, high.

2. Steele. "Word order", p. 610.

3. Corbett. *Agreement*, p. 4.

4. Ferguson. "Grammatical agreement", p. 9.

5. Belnap. *Grammatical agreement*.

6. Similarly, concerning Damascus Arabic, Ambros (*Damascus Arabic*, p. 86) pointed out that "even highly sophisticated rules (which have not been established so far) would fail to cover all instances of agreement with plural subjects as occurring in recorded texts".

7. Cf. Belnap. *Grammatical agreement*, pp. 173-175, referring to *nās* in Cairene Arabic. In Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) *nās* is defined as one of the two plurals of *ʔinsān*, the other being *ʔunās*, "people" (Corriente & Ferrando. *Diccionario Avanzado*, p. 34; Wehr. *Arabisches Wörterbuch*, p. 48; Wright, *A grammar*, p. 233). It is, however, marked as collective in Wehr (*A Dictionary*, p. 30). Regarding *ʕālam*, Corriente & Ferrando (*Diccionario Avanzado*, p. 799) take it to mean merely "world, universe", whereas Wehr (*Arabisches Wörterbuch*, p. 871) relates it generally to "people (*Weltbewohner, Menschen*)" when it takes the plural *ʕālamūn*. Barthélemy's dictionary (*Dictionnaire arabe-français*), which focused on Levantine, and particularly Aleppine, Arabic, places the term *nās* under two roots:  $\sqrt{ʔns}$  "man with the general meaning to be human (*homme dans le sens général, être humain*)" (p. 17); and  $\sqrt{nw}$  "men, people (*hommes, gens*)" (p. 855). In both cases *nās* is a plural. By contrast, *ʕālam* appears defined by the article (*ʕālam*), meaning "the world, the people (*le monde, les*

agreement are possible. Besides, recent studies have demonstrated that the degree of individuation or collectivity perceived by the speaker is crucial for determining the kind of agreement, thus linking agreement patterns more to semantic and pragmatic factors than to morphology.

The major purpose of this paper is to investigate the agreement patterns of the nouns *nās* and *ĥālam* in Damascus Arabic<sup>8</sup>. It will focus on the variation between “strict agreement” (plural — plural) and “deflected agreement” (plural — feminine singular), considering morphological, semantic, and pragmatic factors. The cases in which each kind of agreement tends to occur, and factors which may favor one agreement or the other, will be examined. Results are based on a statistical analysis of the occurrence of *nās* and *ĥālam* with the following kinds of targets: verbs, anaphoric pronouns, adjectives, active and passive participles, and personal and demonstrative pronouns. This study is conducted from a synchronic perspective and based on a corpus of texts gathered in Damascus between 2007 and 2008<sup>9</sup>. It consists of about eight hours of interviews (of approximately 63,350 words) produced by fifty informants. Many of the texts describe different places in Damascus, traditions of the society, and personal experiences of the speakers: thus the time used is the present. Other texts, fewer in number, narrate general or personal events in the past. The texts do not contain any conversations.

Variation in agreement has been the subject of research in different Arabic varieties, with a noticeable increase in publications during the last years (see the list of references below<sup>10</sup>). Melanie Hanitsch<sup>11</sup> has studied, particularly in Damascus Arabic, the variation in agreement of non-human plural nouns controlling attributive adjectives<sup>12</sup>. To the best of my knowledge, there is no other piece of research that so far has focused on the subject of this study, except for a few general references available in the main grammars of Damascus Arabic. Among them, Cowell<sup>13</sup> showed the existence of both kinds of agreement with plural and collective nouns, and pointed out individuality vs. collectivity as a main factor in determining agreement. He gave several examples with *nās* and

*gens*)” (p. 547). Thus *nās* is mainly regarded as plural (or collective), while *ĥālam* is a formally (masculine) singular which primarily means “world” and may also denote “(a group of) people”.

8. The main linguistic particularities of Damascus Arabic are rigorously exposed in Lentin. *Damascus Arabic*. Nevertheless, the most relevant features appearing in our examples will be pointed out.

9. This corpus was gathered for a Ph.D study about the language of the youth in Damascus. Later, it was revised and published as Berlinches. *El dialecto*.

10. I am deeply thankful to Simone Bettega for providing me with several of these sources, for reading an early draft of this paper, and for his helpful thoughts and comments.

11. Hanitsch. “Kongruenzvariation”.

12. Unfortunately, this paper lacks quantitative data.

13. Cowell. *A reference grammar*, pp. 423-426.

*šālam*, but unfortunately did not state quantitative results. Ambros<sup>14</sup> briefly referred to the variation in agreement with plural subjects, including two examples showing both kinds of agreement with *nās*. Ferguson & Ani<sup>15</sup> gave an example in which the verb shows deflected agreement with *nās*; but otherwise did not treat agreement patterns with *nās* and *šālam* in any detail<sup>16</sup>. Grotzfeld<sup>17</sup> provided only general information about agreement patterns in Damascus, regarding *nās* as a plural.

Furthermore, some studies on other Arabic varieties include specific references to agreement patterns with the generic term for denoting “people”, which usually is *nās*. Among them are D’Anna (Fezzānī Arabic, southwestern Libya)<sup>18</sup>; Procházka & Gabsi (Urban Tunisian, particularly the variety of the capital)<sup>19</sup>, Ritt-Benmimoun (Bedouin Tunisian, Nifzāwa region)<sup>20</sup>, Feghali (Lebanese Arabic)<sup>21</sup>, Brustad (including data from Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian, and Kuwaiti Arabic)<sup>22</sup>, Belnap (Cairene Arabic)<sup>23</sup>, and Holes (Bahraini Arabic)<sup>24</sup>. Some remarks about *nās* in Nadji Arabic are found in Bettega<sup>25</sup>, and for the dialect of the city of Salt (Jordan) in Herin & Al-Wer<sup>26</sup>.

### 1.1. *Individualization vs. collectivity*

Brustad’s study on agreement in some varieties of Arabic<sup>27</sup> has demonstrated that the lexical items do not determine the agreement patterns but the speaker who chooses it according to semantic or pragmatic factors. She explains that “if a noun is highly individuated, animate, specific, textually prominent, or quantified, the speaker tends to choose plural agreement<sup>28</sup>; conversely, if the noun is non-

14. Ambros. *Damascus Arabic*, pp. 72 y 86.

15. Ferguson & Ani. *Damascus Arabic*, p. 238.

16. Ferguson (“Grammatical agreement”, p. 12) also provides some information about relating *nās* to deflected agreement.

17. Grotzfeld. *Syrisch-arabische*, pp. 97-98 (fn. 1).

18. D’Anna. “Agreement”, pp. 107-110.

19. Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, pp. 244-247 and 253.

20. Ritt-Benmimoun. “Agreement”, pp. 268-272.

21. Feghali. *Syntaxe des parlers*, pp. 124-126 and 143-144.

22. Brustad. *The syntax*, pp. 53-61.

23. Belnap. *Grammatical agreement*, pp. 61-67, 77-78 and 88-89 (this PhD thesis includes numerous references to the noun *nās*); Belnap. “The meaning-”, pp. 100-102 and 108-109; Belnap. “A new perspective”, pp. 173-175.

24. Holes. *Dialect, culture*, pp. 326-341.

25. Bettega. “Rethinking agreement”, pp. 136-137.

26. Herin & Al-Wer. “From phonological variation”, p. 67.

27. Brustad. *The syntax*, p. 54.

28. Khan (“Object markers”, p. 470) adds that “[a] nominal which refers to a specific entity is more individuated than a generic nominal, which refers to a class of entities.” He defines “individuation” as

specific, collective, and less prominent, the agreement will tend to be feminine singular”<sup>29</sup>. Most of the studies on agreement in different varieties of Arabic corroborate this assertion, pointing out that the degree of individuation perceived by the speaker is a key factor in the choice of agreement.

The present paper is structured closely on Bettega<sup>30</sup>, with the necessary modifications for treating the controllers’ particularities. It is divided into target-related and controller-related factors. The first part analyzes the target type, the distance between controller and target(s), and the word order. The second part treats quantification, qualification, reflexivity, specificity, and definiteness.

Our corpus includes 236 instances of *nās* and *ʕālam*<sup>31</sup> (*nās*: 120, *ʕālam*: 116) controlling 410 targets (266 verbs, 60 anaphoric pronouns, 28 adjectives, 27 active participles, 15 personal pronouns, 9 passive participles, and 7 demonstrative pronouns). Agreement occurs either in masculine plural (i.e. strict) or in third person feminine singular (i.e. deflected)<sup>32</sup>.

ANALYSIS

2. TARGET-RELATED FACTORS

2.1. Target type

Target type has been stated to be the key factor for determining the kind of agreement<sup>33</sup>. The number of occurrences of each kind of target and the agreement type with the controllers *nās* and *ʕālam* provide us with a clear idea of agreement tendencies. Results are given in the following table and analyzed below.

Kind of target <sup>34</sup>	Deflected agreement	Strict agreement	TOTAL
Verbs	104 (39.09%)	162 (60.90%)	266
Anaphoric pronouns	26 (43.33%)	34 (56.66%)	60

“the distinctness or salience of the nominal from its own background and, with regard to a verb complement nominal, also its distinctness from the subject” (p. 470).

29. Brustad. *The syntax*, p. 59. Cowell’s grammar (*A reference grammar*, p. 423) concluded: “Most inanimate plurals, and some animate plurals and collective, have feminine agreement in the predicate when collectivity or generality is emphasized rather than heterogeneity or particularity”.

30. Bettega. “Agreement with plural”.

31. Instances of *ʕālam* showing masculine singular agreement occur only when *ʕālam* denotes “world” and not just “inhabitants of the world (i.e. people)”: for instance, (1) *la-ḥatta nkūn ʕala ʕila maʕ ʔl-ʕālam ʔl-ġarbi* “for us to be in contact with Western world” (*ġarbi*: ADJ.MSG). In the examples in this paper, *ʕālam* will refer to the generic “people” unless indicated otherwise.

32. Other types of agreement, like the masculine singular agreement very commonly found in the Jordanian city of Salt (cf. Herin & Al-Wer. “From phonological variation”, p. 67), or the feminine plural agreement found in Nifzāwa, southern Tunisia (Ritt-Benminoun. “Agreement”) and southwestern Libya (D’Anna. “Agreement”, p. 107), do not occur in our data.

33. Bettega. “Agreement with plural”, p. 173.

34. The kinds of targets are listed in order of number of appearances.

Adjectives	11 (39.28%)	17 (60.71%)	28
Active participles	7 (25.92%)	20 (74.07%)	27
Personal pronouns	0 (0.00%)	13 (100%)	13
Passive participles	4 (44.44%)	5 (55.55%)	9
Demonstrative pronouns	1 (14.28%)	6 (85.71%)	7

### 2.1.1.1. Verbs

Verbs are the most-frequently used targets in the data, with a total of 266 instances. Strict agreement prevails with a percentage of 60.90% versus 39.09% for deflected agreement.

	<i>nās</i>	<i>ʕālam</i>	Total
Deflected agreement	64	40	104
Strict agreement	88	74	162

Example of deflected agreement:

(2) *fī ʕālam baʕfaḍḍala, hiyye ktīr ṭayybe* “there are people who prefer it, it is very tasty” (*baʕfaḍḍal-*: VB.3FSG)

Example of strict agreement:

(3) *fī nās byaʕʕmlu laban b-ʕyār* “there are people who make yogurt with cucumber” (*byaʕʕmlu*: VB.PL)

According to Feghali<sup>35</sup>, in Lebanese Arabic the verb agrees indifferently in plural (strict agreement) or in feminine singular (deflected agreement) when controllers, including the nouns *nās* and *ʕālam*, refer to human collectives. But this is not the case for Damascus, where, at least in clauses where the controllers *nās* and *ʕālam* are involved, strict agreement is more likely to occur.

In Bahrain, cases of verbs showing deflected agreement with the noun *nās* have been associated with descriptions of general actions rather than to what happened at a specific point in the past<sup>36</sup>. Our data suggest the same, though the number of examples of this kind is limited—perhaps because most of our texts are descriptive, focused on different aspects of the daily life in Damascus as well as on the customs and traditions of Damascene society. Therefore generic actions clearly prevail.

Holes has related deflected agreement to a particularly common use of *nās* as an indefinite distributive (i.e. “some others”)<sup>37</sup>, which is also true for Damascus, as the following example shows:

35. Feghali. *Syntaxe des parlers*, p.124.

36. Holes. *Dialect, culture*, p. 331.

37. *Idem*, p. 333.

(4) *fi ʕālam btəʕod*<sup>38</sup> *ʕal-karāsi w tāwlat, fi ʕālam ʔbtəʕrabon ʕal-wāʔef* “there are people who sit on the chairs and tables, and there are people (=some others) who drink it standing up” (*btəʕod*: VB.3FSG)<sup>39</sup>.

2.1.2. *Adjectives*

Our data contain 28 instances of adjectives controlled by *nās* or *ʕālam*. In 60.71% of the cases agreement is strict and in 39.28% deflected<sup>40</sup>.

	<i>nās</i>	<i>ʕālam</i>	Total
Deflected agreement	10	1	11
Strict agreement	12	5	17

Example of deflected agreement:

(5) *kānet ən-nās bən-nasbe ʔali ktīr ǧarībe* “the people were very strange for me” (*ǧarībe*: ADJ.FSG)

Example of strict agreement:

(6) *əl-ʕālam yaʕni hēke wadūdīn* “the people are, I mean... like this, warmhearted” (*wadūdīn*: ADJ.PL)

Strict agreement clearly prevails, representing almost two-thirds of the total. According to Brustad<sup>41</sup>, the reason for these results is the higher degree of individuation associated with modified nouns (see section 3.2.1.).

Moreover, as can be seen in the next table, no significant differences in agreement type concerning the attributive or predicative nature of the adjectives are observed in the data<sup>42</sup>.

	<i>nās</i>		<i>ʕālam</i>	
	Attributive	Predicative	Attributive	Predicative
Deflected agreement	8	2	1	0
Strict agreement	9	3	1	4
TOTAL	17	5	2	4

38. The verbal modifier for the general present is *b-*, which generally turns into *m* for the first person plural, cf. Cowell. *A reference grammar*, p. 180. Moreover, in Damascus *q* is realized as a glottal stop (ʔ), except in borrowings of Classical Arabic, cf. Lentin. *Damascus Arabic*, p. 546.

39. In these cases the existential particle *fi* “there is” usually occurs before the controllers.

40. This example from Cowell (*A reference grammar*, p. 500), *nās ǧəʕm* “ignorant people”, also shows strict agreement.

41. Brustad. *The syntax*, p. 61.

42. Only predicative adjectives show a higher number of cases of strict agreement with *ʕālam* (4 cases of deflected agreement against none of strict agreement). But we consider the number of instances insufficient for any conclusion.

Despite the prevalence of strict agreement, our results indicate that in Damascus Arabic cases of adjectives showing deflected agreement with the controllers *nās* and *šālam* occur with more frequency than in other Arabic varieties. For example, in Urban Tunisian, Procházka & Gabsi have detected only a few cases of adjectives triggering deflected agreement with *nās* and *šbād*, both meaning “people” (e.g. *nās bāhya* “good people”)<sup>43</sup>. They consider these cases idiomatic collocations, thus not controlled by pragmatic discourse structures, and they affirm that deflected agreement of adjectives —with human controllers— is even more restricted than with verbs and pronouns. At the same time, Feghali, focusing on Lebanese Arabic, claimed that the agreement of the adjective with controllers referring to human collectives is always strict<sup>44</sup>. In Bahraini Arabic, strict agreement with adjectives clearly prevails<sup>45</sup>. However, Holes also recorded several cases of deflected agreement, usually when the reference was generic or collective. By contrast, Bettega’s findings in Omani Arabic are very interesting since they show a high percentage (94.3%) of attributive adjectives attracting deflected agreement<sup>46</sup>. These results are, however, based on non-human controllers and the author points out that his data about the noun *nās* is insufficient for statistical analysis<sup>47</sup>.

Our results agree with Belnap’s<sup>48</sup>, whose hierarchy of deflected agreement particularly focused on *nās* places predicative adjectives on the top of the list<sup>49</sup>. According to Brustad<sup>50</sup>, verbs trigger deflected agreement more than adjectives, explained by the higher degree of individuation of modified nouns. This statement is nevertheless not focused on the controllers *nās* and *šālam*. Our data show exactly the same percentage of deflected agreement for both verbs and adjectives.

Adjectives and their connection with the controller’s qualification are further analyzed in section 3.2.1.

43. Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 247.

44. Feghali. *Syntaxe des parlers*, p. 143. The author provides two examples of this kind. He attributes exceptions to this rule to the influence of the Classical language, or to the need to rhyme in popular songs (p. 144). These statements definitely do not agree with our findings, which show almost 40% of deflected agreement. We wonder how the situation could change so much in a period of less a century, especially given that Lebanese Arabic is a Levantine variety very close to Damascus Arabic.

45. Holes. *Dialect, culture*, pp. 327-329.

46. Bettega. “Agreement with plural”, p. 168. For predicative adjectives the percentage is 55.6%.

47. *Ídem*, fn. 17.

48. Belnap. *Grammatical agreement*, p. 88.

49. Belnap (*Grammatical agreement*, pp. 66-67) moreover mentions that in Abdel-Massih *et al.* (*A reference grammar*, p. 22) all the speakers used deflected agreement with *nās* and *šālam* to some degree.

50. Brustad. *The syntax*, p. 61.

### 2.1.3. Participles

Our data include 36 participles controlled by *nās* and *ʕālam*. Among them, 27 are active and 9 passive. Due to their different grammatical nature and behavior, they will be treated separately.

#### a) Active participles

Active participles show a clear inclination for strict agreement with a very high percentage of occurrences (74.07%):

	<i>nās</i>	<i>ʕālam</i>	Total
Deflected agreement	3	4	7
Strict agreement	13	7	20

Example of deflected agreement:

(7) *an-nās rāyḥa ʕala šəgla* “the people are going to their job” (*rāyḥa*: AP.FSG)

Example of strict agreement:

(8) *fi nās mu šāyfin* “there are people who do not see” (*šāyfin*: AP.PL)

The prevalence of strict agreement could be explained by its role as a verb form<sup>51</sup>. However, in 17 of our 20 examples of strict agreement two other features of specification or individuation may have had an impact on the results: the presence of the relative pronoun in 6 cases, and a distance greater than four words from the controller in 11 cases<sup>52</sup>.

Concerning the small number of occurrences of deflected agreement (7 occurrences — 25.92%), one is clearly influenced by MSA, being in a religious context with some MSA loans, and three have terms emphasizing collectivity<sup>53</sup>. Therefore, only three cases of deflected agreement are not influenced by any special factors.

The limited data about the agreement patterns of these participles with both human and non-human controllers in Syrian Arabic, as well as in other varieties of Arabic, do not allow us to determine whether or not our findings are a regular tendency in agreement. This is definitely a point for further research.

#### b) Passive participles

On the other hand, passive participles show a nearly equal proportion of both kinds of agreement, 55.55% strict and 44.44% deflected. Nevertheless, these

51. In our data verbs show a relatively high percentage of strict agreement (60.90%: see section 2.1.1).

52. These factors are further examined in sections 3.2.2 and 2.3, respectively.

53. I.e. *fi ktīr*, *baʕd*, and *kəll*, as discussed in sections 3.1.1-2 and 3.3.

results also should be taken with caution because the number of occurrences in our data is very limited. Therefore we will refrain from stating a conclusion until more data is available.

	<i>nās</i>	<i>ʕālam</i>	Total
Deflected agreement	-	4	4
Strict agreement	5	-	5

#### 2.1.4. Pronouns

##### a) Personal pronouns

The pronoun *hənnen* (3PL) is the only personal pronoun controlled by *nās* and *ʕālam* appearing in our data, with a total of 14 instances. Strict agreement is categorically used.

	<i>nās</i>	<i>ʕālam</i>	Total
Deflected agreement	-	-	0
Strict agreement	9	5	14

Example of strict agreement:

(9) *ən-nās bəl-ʔmhāžrīn la-hallaʔ gālibūt ʔlli sākni bəl-ʔmhāžrīn hənnen ʔšwām*  
 “the people in the *Mhāžrīn*<sup>54</sup> until now most of those living in the *Mhāžrīn* (they) are originally Damascene” (*hənnen*: PRON.3PL)

Some informants who were asked later considered the use of the personal pronoun *hiyye* (3FSG) to be also perfectly acceptable, though our data show no instances of it.

Personal pronouns and their connection with the controller’s specification and individuation are further analyzed in section 3.4.1.

##### b) Demonstrative pronouns

Our data have only 7 instances of demonstrative pronouns controlled by *nās* and *ʕālam*: these pronouns are *hadōl* (PL, 4 instances), its variant *hadlōn* (PL, 1 instance), and *hal*<sup>55</sup> (2 instances). Although our informants affirm that *nās* and *ʕālam* may well be defined by the determinant *hayy* (3FSG), our data have no

54. Name of a neighborhood in Damascus.

55. This is a reduced form, which in combination with the article (-l-) turns into a prefix or a proclitic. It is the only reduced form of all the proximal demonstratives (cf. Cowell. *A reference grammar*, p. 556). We decided to keep these two cases to illustrate the use of this demonstrative with our controllers and because their presence (in 1 deflected and 1 strict agreement context) does not alter the results.

examples of this. Among our 7 instances, 6 trigger strict agreement. The unique case of deflected agreement occurred with the form *hal-* in which gender and number are not visible<sup>56</sup>.

	<i>nās</i>	<i>ʕālam</i>	Total
Deflected agreement	1	-	1
Strict agreement	4	2	6

Example of strict agreement:

(10) *əl-ʕālam ʔlli byəzu kəll marra yaʕni ʕi sabʕa hadlōn* “the people who come every time, they are around seven” (*hadlōn*: DEM.PL)

Because personal and demonstrative pronouns prominently mark the controllers *nās* and *ʕālam*, they are the kinds of targets which show the higher percentage of strict agreement. However, the number of instances of both target types is very limited; hence these findings must not be taken as indicative.

Demonstrative pronouns and their connection to the controller’s specification and individuation are further analyzed in section 3.4.2.

c) Anaphoric pronouns

Our 60 occurrences of anaphoric pronouns controlled by *nās* and *ʕālam* show a slightly higher preference for strict agreement, with 56.66% of the cases. However, a significant number of anaphoric pronouns showing deflected agreement were suffixed to the quantifier *kəll* or to the reflexive particle *baʕd*<sup>57</sup>, two elements which foster deflected agreement and which perhaps have contributed to the increased number of examples of this kind (see sections 3.1.2. and 3.3.).

	<i>nās</i>	<i>ʕālam</i>	Total
Deflected agreement	13	13	26
Strict agreement	18	16	34

Example of deflected agreement:

(11) *fi kūr nās ʕəfyet ʕyūna* “there are many people whose eyes were healed” (-a: PRON.3FSG)

Example of strict agreement:

56. See example 49.

57. Detailed results: Deflected agreement: *kəlla*: 9 – *baʕda*: 6; strict agreement: *kəllon*: 4– *baʕdon*: 2.

(12) *hnīke bathəssi l-šālam šandon ʔšwayyet hamīmiyye* “there you feel that the people have a little bit of intimacy” (-on: PRON.3PL)

In summary, Belnap’s findings show a percentage of deflected agreement similar to ours (his: 39% — ours: 38.07%)<sup>58</sup>; but his hierarchy list differs from ours, since he places predicative adjectives on the top, and we in the middle. Also, our position for the anaphoric pronouns is second from the top<sup>59</sup> and his second from the bottom. Plus our data does not show significant differences between predicative and attributive adjectives (see section 2.1.2.)<sup>60</sup>.

In southwestern Libya the controller *nās* has a clear tendency for strict agreement: D’Anna found this type of agreement in 76.47% of his occurrences, while deflected agreement was 17.64%<sup>61</sup>. According to Bettega, strict agreement was also the case for Omani Arabic<sup>62</sup>. On the other hand, deflected agreement prevails in Bedouin Tunisian: Ritt-Benmimoun registers 47.20% deflected versus 30.43% strict agreement<sup>63</sup>.

## 2.2. Word order

In our data, the targets preceding the controllers *nās* and *šālam* are verbs, and personal and demonstrative pronouns. Unfortunately, the number of instances of the two latter is too limited to discern any tendency<sup>64</sup>. Therefore this section simply focuses on the verb in pre-controller position. Preverbal clauses (i.e. V-S) seldom appear in our data (23 instances — 8.64%), whereas post-verbal clauses

58. Belnap. *The meaning*, p. 101.

59. Unfortunately, the similar frequency of the two kinds of agreement prevents us from stating whether or not these pronouns individualize the controllers, as has been observed in other varieties like Urban Tunisian (Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 252). Hopefully the analysis of anaphoric pronouns in agreement with different kind of controllers will clarify this question.

60. Belnap’s hierarchy related to *nās* is predicative adjectives > predicative verbs > attributive demonstratives > anaphoric pronouns > attributive adjectives (Belnap. “A new perspective”, pp. 87-88). Ours is past participles > anaphoric pronouns > (predicative and attributive) adjectives > verbs > active participles > demonstrative pronouns. By contrast, Corbett’s prediction of deflected agreement is attributive > predicative > relative pronoun > personal pronoun (Corbett. *Hierarchies, Targets*, p. 207).

61. D’Anna. “Agreement”, p. 108. This variety includes two other types of agreement: masculine singular and feminine plural. But for both the author finds very low percentages of occurrence.

62. Bettega. “Agreement patterns”, p. 149.

63. Ritt-Benmimoun. “Agreement”, p. 272, based on Ritt-Benmimoun. *Texte im arabischen*. To these results a 1.86% of mixed agreement that the author treats separately must be added.

64. Our data regarding both kinds of targets in pre-controller position are: Deflected agreement: 0 personal pronouns, 1 demonstrative pronoun; strict agreement: 2 personal pronouns and 4 demonstrative pronouns. Bettega’s data (“Agreement with plural”, p. 172) show a high percentage of demonstratives in pre-controller position with deflected agreement, which is not seen in our data (see section 2.1.4.). Also, in our data personal pronouns categorically show strict agreement.

(i.e. S-V) are clearly predominant (243 occurrences — 91.35%)<sup>65</sup>. Of our 23 instances of V-S clauses, 8 show deflected agreement (34.78%) and 15 strict agreement (65.21%)<sup>66</sup>. One of the three instances of deflected agreement seems to be influenced by MSA, and probably a second one as well<sup>67</sup>. Ferguson states that deflected agreement in verb-initial sentences in New Arabic is classicizing when it takes place in set phrases taken from Classical or in classicizing registers of oral Arabic<sup>68</sup>.

These results indicate that word order has a minor effect in determining the agreement patterns with *nās* and *ṣālam* in Damascus Arabic. The same has been detected in such other varieties of Arabic as those from Egypt<sup>69</sup>, Urban Tunisian<sup>70</sup>, and Oman<sup>71</sup>. In varieties like Bedouin Tunisian, the pre-controller's position of a verb in mixed patterns<sup>72</sup> frequently triggers deflected agreement, and the post-controller's position strict agreement<sup>73</sup>. Our data include: (13) *bass kānet maʿl-ma*<sup>74</sup> *ḡalt-allek yaḡzu n-nās kalla yaḡtəmṣu* “but, as I told you, all the people came and met”. In this example three verbs are controlled by *nās*: two verbs precede it, the first of which shows deflected agreement (*kānet*: VB.3FSG) and the second strict agreement (*yaḡzu*: VB.3PL). The third verb follows the controller and shows strict agreement (*yaḡtəmṣu*: VB.3PL). Also notice that the anaphoric

65. Ferguson (“Grammatical agreement”, p. 14.) explains that in old Arabic V-S sentences, number and gender agreement is almost completely neutralized, whereas S-V sentences show full number and gender agreement. He adds that the modern dialects have moved toward elimination of the differences between verb-initial and verb-second patterns and toward an increased use of strict agreement. Nevertheless V-S sentences are still very common in some varieties of Arabic, such as those of Bahrain and in the Najd (Holes. *Dialect, culture*, p. 368).

66. Three examples of this in Bloch & Grotzfeld (*Damaszenisch-arabische*, p. 8, 40, and 108) show strict agreement.

67. The first example occurs in a religious context and the second in a conversation about tourism in Syria, where the informant used several features of MSA although the register was mainly informal.

68. Ferguson. “Grammatical agreement”, p. 14.

69. Belnap. *Grammatical Agreement*, p. 89. He states that word order does not seem to be significant with regard to *nās*, though he cautions that, due to the scarcity of data in V-S clauses, this conclusion is tentative.

70. Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 244.

71. Bettega. “Agreement with plural”, p. 173. Another example of this kind in Najdi Arabic including *nās* is found in Bettega. “Rethinking agreement”, p. 137.

72. “Mixed agreement refers to the co-occurrence of one or more deflected agreement loci (i.e. target) and one or more strict agreement targets with a single head (controller)” (Belnap. *Grammatical agreement*, p. 78).

73. Cf. Ritt-Benmimoun. “Agreement”, p. 270.

74. *t* represents the historical interdental *t̤*. In Damascus Arabic historical interdentals are almost systematically shifted into occlusive dentals i.e. *d̤* > *d*: *dāb*, *bidūb* “to melt”, *t̤* > *t*: *tīl* “heavy”, and *ḡ* > *ḡ*, *ḡall*, *biḡall* “to remain”. However, in borrowings from Classical Arabic interdentals turn into sibilants, i.e. *d̤* > *z*: *zaki* “intelligent”, *t̤* > *s*: *sānawi* “secondary”, *ḡ* > *ḡ*: *ḡann*, *biḡann* “to believe”, cf. Lentin. *Damascus Arabic*, p. 546.

pronoun suffixed to the quantifier *kəll* (-a: PRON.3FSG) shows deflected agreement although placed between two plural verbs.

### 2.3. Distance

Distance is a crucial factor for determining agreement in Arabic<sup>75</sup>: the further a target is from its controller, the more frequently semantic agreement occurs<sup>76</sup>. Belnap considers distance to be the second factor group determining agreement, after controller type<sup>77</sup>. He explains that the nearer a target is to its controller, the more immediate is the association between both and thus deflected agreement is far less likely to interfere with the interlocutor perceiving their grammatical relationship<sup>78</sup>. On the other hand, at greater distance the interlocutor's possibility of confusing the controller-target grammatical relationship is greater and therefore the use of strict agreement is preferred.

Several studies have corroborated the influence of distance in agreement type in different varieties of Arabic, specifically Cairene Arabic<sup>79</sup>, Bahraini Arabic<sup>80</sup>, Omani Arabic<sup>81</sup>, and Najdi Arabic<sup>82</sup>.

Our data show the following results concerning both types of agreement:

Distance from controller <sup>83</sup>	Occurrences	Deflected agreement	Strict agreement
Dist. -3	1	1 (100%)	-
Dist. -2	6	-	6 (100%)
Dist. -1	23	8 (34.78%)	15 (65.21%)
Dist.+1	180	92 (51.11%)	88 (48.88%)
Dist.+2	59	27 (45.76%)	32 (54.23%)
Dist.+3	23	10 (43.47%)	13 (56.52%)
Dist. +4	14	7 (50%)	7 (50%)
Dist. over 4	104	8 (7.69%)	96 (92.30%)

75. As well as in other languages, as Corbett (*Hierarchies, targets*, p. 74) has shown. Moreover, Belnap ("A New Perspective", p. 177) states that "the effect of distance between both the controller and its target underlines the reality of the human discourse processing factor".

76. Corbett. *Hierarchies, targets*, p. 74.

77. Belnap. "A new perspective", p. 175.

78. Belnap. *The meaning*, p. 104.

79. Belnap. *Grammatical agreement*, p. 86.

80. Holes. *Dialect, culture*, pp. 335-337.

81. Bettega. "Agreement with plural", pp. 168-169, y "Agreement patterns", pp. 150-151.

82. Bettega. "Rethinking agreement", p. 137.

83. Following Belnap's system for measuring the distance between the controller and the target, negative numbers indicate targets occurring in pre-controller's position and positive numbers targets in post-controller's position (cf. Belnap. "A new perspective", pp. 175-177).

According to the data, the only position which significantly increases the chances of strict agreement is when targets occur more than four words after their controllers, with a percentage of 92.3%<sup>84</sup>, in line with previous studies on agreement. In other post-controller positions both kinds of agreement have similar frequencies. Strict agreement slightly prevails for all cases, except for targets immediately following the controller (dist. +1)<sup>85</sup>.

There is a prevalence of strict agreement for targets appearing in the pre-controller position, contrary to Belnap<sup>86</sup>, whose data show this position favoring deflected agreement. However, our results are based only on the controllers *nās* and *Ġālam*, and our number of instances is limited, therefore these findings cannot be taken as conclusive: other kinds of controllers may not follow this tendency. Only further research can tell.

Moreover, distance seems to be responsible for the numerous cases of mixed agreement found in the data. In most mixed agreement patterns the first target shows deflected agreement with its controller, prompted by proximity, whereas the second target has strict agreement with the same controller<sup>87</sup>. The following examples demonstrate how distance increases the chances for strict agreement:

(14) *al-Ġālam kalla bi-ramaḍān byāklu ḡaktar mən ġēr ramaḍān* “in Ramadan, all the people eat more than when it is not Ramadan”

The first target (-a: PRON.3FSG) is one word separated from its controller and shows deflected agreement, probably intensified by the quantifier *kall* (see section 3.1.2.), to which it is suffixed; while the second target (*byāklu*: VB.3PL) is separated by three words from the controller and shows strict agreement.

(15) *ktīr Ġālam bəṣūf masalan wāhed nāzeh ḡaw wāhed ʾmnīh bəl-ḡayāt biḡāwlu yḡalldū*<sup>88</sup> “many people see someone successful or someone good at life and try to copy him”

84. Many of these cases occur in mixed agreement patterns. The prevailing target type are verbs (58 instances), which are also the most common targets in our data. The second most numerous target type are anaphoric pronouns (18 instances), which are also the second type of targets most frequent in our data and prone to appear more distant from the controller than other kinds of targets.

85. Bettega’s findings in Omani Arabic (“Agreement patterns”, p. 169) show a clear preference for deflected agreement in this position (76.1% for all control types and 88.1% for non-human controllers). These results, however, are not specifically focused on the controllers *nās* and *Ġālam*.

86. Belnap. *Grammatical agreement*, p. 87.

87. A strong tendency which is explained by Holes (*Dialect, culture*, p. 353) as the need to “keep track” of the sense of the unfolding text. Holes (*Idem*, p. 353) claims that his corpus contains no cases in which strict agreement shifts to deflected agreement. Urban Tunisian also shows a slight preference to strict agreement in specifically located sequential targets (particularly anaphoric pronouns); but it registers instances of agreement shifting from strict to deflected when the controller is modified by a demonstrative pronoun (Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 258).

88. The lengthening of the last vowel in *yḡalldū* represents the suffixed pronoun for the 3MSG. It is the only mark for this pronoun when a word shows a vowel ending, for instance: *fī* “in” > *fī* “in him”,

The first target (*bəṭṣūf*: VB.3FSG) is separated by one word from its controller and shows deflected agreement, while the two second targets (*biḥāwlu*: VB.3PL, *yʔalldu*: VB.3PL) are separated from their controller by nine and ten words, respectively, and show strict agreement.

However, in other cases deflected agreement is maintained through the whole sentence despite distance:

(16) *bass əl-ʕālam ma bəṭḥəss ḥāla məṭṭarra təḥməla* “but the people don’t feel obliged to carry it”.

In this case the consecutive sequence of the targets (*bəṭḥəss*: VB.3FSG, *-a*: PRON.3FSG, *məṭṭarra*: PP.SG, *təḥməl-*: VB.3FSG) seems to result in deflected agreement for all of them.

(17) *fi nās bətkūn ʕāye ʔabl əl-kəll ʕal-madīne*<sup>89</sup>, *zāyre r-rasūl u baʕdēn bətrūḥ ʕala makke* “there are people who first come to Medina, visit the Prophet, and afterwards go to Makkah”. *bətrūḥ* (VB.3FSG) is separated by nine words from its controller, a distance which normally would have resulted in strict agreement. This example was possibly influenced by MSA because the topic of the conversation was the Pilgrimage and several features of MSA can be observed in it.

(18) *nnās bətkūn bibyūtha bakkūr w-btəzi ʕaʕīye mən ʔaʕgālha* “the people are early at home and come back from work in the evening”

In this example, extracted from Bloch & Grotzfeld<sup>90</sup>, all the targets (*bətkūn*: VB.3FSG, *-ha*: PRON.3FSG, *btəzi*: VB.3FSG, *-ha*: PRON.3FSG) show deflected agreement.

Finally, Procházka & Gabsi have found particularly common patterns of mixed agreement in which the first clause (V-S) shows deflected agreement and the second strict agreement (with the same controller)<sup>91</sup>. Unfortunately our data only contain the following example with similar structure, which might be due to the limited number of V-S clauses:

(19) *bass kānet məʔl-ma ʔəlt-əllek yəzu n-nās kəlla yəʕtəmʕu* “but, as I told you, all the people came to meet” (*kānet*: VB.3FSG, *yəzu*: VB.3PL, *yəʕtəmʕu*: VB.3PL).

*bəṭḥəbbi* “you (F) like” > *bəṭḥəbbī* “you (F) like him”. Whereas when a word ends in a consonant, the pronoun is *-o*, for instance: *bēt* “house” > *bēto* “his house”.

89. The shift *a* > *e* in final position (*madīna* > *madīne*) is known as *final ʔimāla* and takes place after non-pharyngeal, laryngeal or velarized consonants (i.e. *b, t, ʕ, d, z, s, š, f, k, l, m, n, w, y*) and sometimes after *r* (cf. Cowell. *A reference grammar*, p. 138-139).

90. Bloch & Grotzfeld. *Damaszenisch-arabische*, p. 80. Translation by the present author.

91. Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 246.

Although our data focuses only on clauses involving the subjects *nās* and *ʕĀlam*, results suggest that this pattern is not very frequent in Damascus Arabic.

On the other hand, cases of targets showing the shift from strict to deflected agreement with the same controller are not found in our data.

Finally, our data include several instances of coordinated clauses, each with two different controllers and targets. They have similar grammatical structure but show different kinds of agreement. Apparently, there is no criteria for explaining it, as the following examples show:

(20) *mānḥabb*<sup>92</sup> *əl-ʕĀlam ət-tānye, fi ḥabb lal-musāʕade lan-nās əl-ʔāxarīn* “we like other people; there is love for helping (= we like helping) others”

This example includes two coordinated sentences with parallel semantic construction —*əl-ʕĀlam ət-tānye* and *n-nās əl-ʔāxarīn*— but targets (*tānye*: ADJ.FSG, *ʔāxarīn*: ADJ.PL) showing different agreement. The reason for this is opaque.

(21) *fi masalan ʕĀlam byəṭbarraʕu b-maʕāri, masalan ʕĀlam ʔbtəḥtāʒ ʕamalīyyāt fi ʕĀlam byəṭbarraʕu masalan, fi ḥatta ʕĀlam ʔb-dubay ʔbtəbʕat ʔtyāb* “there is for example people who donate money; for example (if) people need an operation, there are people who donate, for example, even people in Dubai who send clothes”

The four targets in this passage, in order of appearance, are: *byəṭbarraʕu* (VB.3PL), *btəḥtāʒ* (VB.3FSG), *byəṭbarraʕu* (VB.3PL), and *btəbʕat* (VB.3FSG). The four verbs appear after their four respective controllers, which is *ʕĀlam* in all four cases. The less agentivity of the verb *btəḥtāʒ* may explain the deflected agreement, but based on this argument we are not able to explain the deflected agreement of the fourth verb. The variation must be due to the speaker’s criteria.

### 3. CONTROLLER-RELATED FACTORS

#### 3.1. Quantification

Previous studies have demonstrated that quantifiers play an important role in determining the type of agreement<sup>93</sup>. These sources particularly confirm that most of the numerical quantifiers strongly favor strict agreement; however, the uncountable nature of the controllers *nās* and *ʕĀlam* does not allow numerical quantification.

Our data include the following quantifiers: *kūr* “many”, *kəll* “all”, *ḡālibīyye* “majority”, *ʔaktar* “majority”, and *baʔīyye* “remainder”.

<sup>92</sup> *m* is the first person plural verbal modifier for the present, after the assimilation *b > m* (see fn. 38).

<sup>93</sup> Cf. for instance Belnap. *Grammatical agreement*. p. 68, and Bettega. “Agreement with”, p. 157.

### 3.1.1. *Quantifier kt̄r and the co-occurrence of fi kt̄r*

The quantifier *kt̄r* “many, a lot” followed by an indefinite noun fosters deflected agreement because it denotes low individuation<sup>94</sup>. Our data include only one example of *kt̄r* attracting deflected agreement but 7 examples attracting strict agreement, though 5 of the 7 cases of strict agreement show other features of specification, which perhaps explains the higher percentage of strict agreement. This particular question should be further studied by examining more occurrences of *kt̄r* in sentences involving *nās* and *ʕālam* and different human and non-human controllers.

Examples of deflected agreement:

(22) *kt̄r nās ʔbt̄rʔoʕ dabke* “many people dance Dabka” (*bt̄rʔoʕ*: VB.3FSG)

Examples of strict agreement:

(23) *hiyye ʔarne mrattabe w ʔkt̄r ʕālam sākn̄n fiyya* “it is a well-organized place and many people live there” (*sākn̄n*: AP.PL)

However, our data indicate that the co-occurrence of the existential particle *fi* “there is/are” and the quantifier *kt̄r* clearly promotes deflected agreement. In this construction *kt̄r* may precede or follow the controller (e.g. *fi kt̄r nās/ʕālam* or *fi nās/ʕālam ʔkt̄r*). Among our examples, the agreement is deflected in 8 cases and strict in 3, one of the latter involving features of specification. Although studies focused on other varieties of Arabic have indicated that *fi* is an emphazier of generality and collectivity, as in Urban Tunisian<sup>95</sup> and southwestern Libya<sup>96</sup>, in Damascus Arabic it seems that this is true only when *fi* accompanies *kt̄r*, at least in clauses involving the controllers *nās* and *ʕālam*<sup>97</sup>.

Examples of deflected agreement:

(24) *fi ʕālam ʔkt̄r ʔbt̄zi ʕala hāda l-ʔəʕtimāʕ* “there are a lot of people who come to this meeting” (*bt̄zi*: VB.3FSG)

(25) *fi kt̄r ʕālam ʔāxde ʔəkret kif kānet ʕāyše l-masīhiyye ʔabʔl* “there are a lot of people who have an idea of how the life of the Christians was before” (*ʔāxde*: AP.FSG)

Example of strict agreement:

94. Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 244, y p. 246, referring to the form *baʕša* “many” in Urban Tunisian. Also, example (5) in Ritt-Benmimoun. “Agreement”, p. 266 (Tunisian Bedouin), also involving *baʕša*, is consistent with this.

95. Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 245.

96. D’Anna. “Agreement”, p. 108.

97. Results which corroborate that *fi* does not trigger only one kind of agreement are:

	<i>fi nās</i>	<i>fi ʕālam</i>	TOTAL
Deflected agreement	19	16	35
Strict agreement	22	8	30

(26) *fī ġālam ʔktīr byaʔʔbsu ḥalaʔ ʔkbīr* “there are a lot of people who wear big earrings” (*byaʔʔbsu*: VB.3PL)

### 3.1.2. Quantifier *kəll*

The quantifier *kəll* “all” emphasizes collectivity and generality, hence triggers deflected agreement. Our data show 21 cases of deflected agreement in which *kəll* precedes or follows the controllers (i.e. *kəll nās/ġālam* or *ən-nās/ġālam kəll-a/on*), and 7 cases of strict agreement, two of which can be explained by the distance between the controller and the target or by the presence of features of specification. The results confirm the clear tendency to collectivity fostered by *kəll* – thus deflected agreement prevails. The same has been observed in other varieties of Arabic, as in Urban Tunisian<sup>98</sup> and Bedouin Tunisian<sup>99</sup>, both studies specifically referring to the controller *nās*, and in Omani Arabic<sup>100</sup>.

Examples of deflected agreement:

(27) *kəll ən-nās ʔaʕdet ʔb-bēta* “all the people stayed at home” (*ʔaʕdet*: VB.3FSG)

(28) *kəll əl-ġālam mawʒūde bəʒ-ʒāmeʕ* “all the people are at the mosque” (*mawʒūde*: PP.FSG)

Example of strict agreement:

(29) *bəʕšūfī kəll əl-ġālam wāʔfīn ʕaʒ-ʒabal u ʕam-byədʕu rabbon* “you see all the people standing upon the mountain and imploring God” (*wāʔfīn*: AP.PL)

### 3.1.3. Other quantifiers

In addition to *ktīr* and *kəll*, our data include three more quantifiers: *ġālibīyye* “majority”, *ʔaktar* “majority”, and *baʔīyye* “rest”. All of them seem to favor strict agreement.

*Ġālibīyye* appears in the following two clauses:

(30) *bəʕlāʔi ʔanno ġālibīʔ əl-ġālam ʔlli sāknīn byəʕtəġlu təʒʒār, bəl-ʕamāra, ġālibīʔon byəʕtəġlu bəl-məhan əl-yadawīyye* “you find that most of the people who live (there) are traders; in the ʕAmāra<sup>101</sup> most of them are craftsmen” (*sāknīn*: AP.PL, *byəʕtəġlu*: VB.3PL, *ġālibīʔon*: NOUN-PRON.PL, *byəʕtəġlu*: VB.3PL).

In this case, the controller is clearly specified by the relative pronoun *ʔlli*.

98. Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 245.

99. Ritt-Benmimoun. “Agreement”, p. 272, p. 283.

100. Bettega. “Agreement with plural”, p. 163. On the other hand, in southwestern Libya *kəll* does not seem to attract deflected agreement (D’Anna. “Agreement”, p. 108, specifically referring to *nās*).

101. Name of a traditional neighborhood in Damascus.

(31) *kamān ġālibūt hal-ṣālam baḥḥassiyyon ʔanno hānnen la-hallaʔ šəġlon kamwazzafīn* “also, most of the people, you feel that up to now they have worked as employees” (*baḥḥassiyy-on*: VB-PRON.PL, *hānnen*: PRON.3PL, *šəġl-on*: NOUN-PRON.PL, *mwazzafīn*: PP.PL)

*ʔaktar* occurred twice in our data, both times in clauses which show strict agreement:

(32) *fīyya nās bass ʔaktaron sūriyyīn* “there are people in it; but most of them are Syrians” (*ʔaktar-on*: ADV-PRON.PL, *sūriyyīn*: NOUN.PL)

Finally, *baʔiyye* appears just once, in a sentence showing strict agreement:

(33) *əl-baʔiyye nās ṣādiyyīn* “the rest are common people” (*ṣādiyyīn*: ADJ.PL)

### 3.2. Qualification

#### 3.2.1. Adjectives

Khan stated that a nominal specified by a qualifier is more individuated than one not so specified<sup>102</sup>. Among the qualifiers which specify the controllers *nās* and *ṣālam*, adjectives are the most numerous and attract strict agreement with more frequency (60.71%; see section 2.1.2.).

Examples of strict agreement:

(34) *ʔaktar mən əl-nās əl-ṣādīn* “more than the common people” (*ṣādīn*: ADJ.PL)

(35) *əl-nās ḥabbābīn u kəllon laṭīfīn* “the people are affectionate and all (of them) charming” (*ḥabbābīn*: ADJ.PL, *kəll-on*: ADV-PRON.PL, *laṭīfīn*: ADJ.PL)

Strict agreement is maintained despite the presence of *kəll*, which triggers deflected agreement (see section 3.1.2.).

Examples of deflected agreement:

(36) *ṭabṣan mənḥəbb əl-ṣālam ət-tānye* “of course we love the other people” (*tānye*: ADJ.3FSG)

(37) *fī nās ġarībe bīrəššu l-məḷḥ ʔāxer ʔāxer əš-ši* “there are strange people who add the salt at the very end”

This is a case of mixed agreement in which the first target (*ġarībe*: ADJ.FSG) shows deflected agreement and the second target (*bīrəššu*: VB.3PL) strict agreement. Interestingly, both targets appear one after the other.

#### 3.2.2. Relative pronoun (*yəlli*)

The presence of the relative pronoun in a clause clearly emphasizes specification, thus attracting strict agreement. Our data has 25 instances of this, against 2 which show deflected agreement.

Examples of strict agreement:

102. Khan. “Object markers”, p. 470.

(38) *ən-nās ʿlli ʕandon ʿrfiʔ ʕāru yəsharu* “the people who have a partner, started going out in the night” (*ʕand-on*: PREP-PRON.PL, *ʕāru*: VB.3PL, *yəsharu*: VB.3PL)

(39) *ḥābeb ʔanno n-nās ʿlli barra bi-ʔōrəbba yšūfūha* “I would like that the people who are outside, in Europe, see it” (*yšūfū-*: VB.3PL)

Examples of deflected agreement:

(40) *nəhna ʕanna nās ʿlli ʕam-yəʕallam əl-ʔəslām*<sup>103</sup> “we have people who are studying Islam” (*yəʕallam*: VB.3FSG)

(41) *lāzem ʿtsāʕdi n-nās yəlli ma maʕa maʕāri* “you must help the people who have no money” (*maʕ-a*: PREP-PRON.3FSG)

The prevalence of strict agreement in relative clauses has been observed in other varieties of Arabic, such as that of southwestern Libya<sup>104</sup> and in Urban Tunisian<sup>105</sup>.

Therefore qualification (by an adjective or a relative pronoun) favor strict agreement, in contrast to Omani Arabic, where qualified controllers show a preference for deflected agreement<sup>106</sup>.

### 3.3. Reflexibility

#### 3.3.1. Reflexive pronoun *baʕd*

Khan pointed out that reflexive complements are a feature of non-individuation<sup>107</sup>. Our data show 6 cases of deflected agreement and 2 of strict agreement. Perhaps these two cases of strict agreement are because the targets follow a target already in the plural. As was stated above, the shift strict > deflected is unusual in Damascus Arabic (see section 2.3.).

Examples of deflected agreement:

(42) *əl-ḥāra š-šāmiyye kānet kəll ən-nās taʕref baʕda* “in the Damascene neighborhood all the people knew each other” (*taʕref*: VB.3FSG, *baʕd-a*: PRON-PRON.3FSG)

(43) *masalan ən-nās ʕalāqāta maʕ baʕdha kif* “for example, how is the people’s relation to each other” (*ʕalāqāt-a*: NOUN-PRON.3FSG, *baʕd-ha*: PRON-PRON.3FSG)

103. Usually the relative pronoun is only used when its antecedent is definite (cf. Aldoukhi *et al. Lehrbuch*, p. 217). Since *nās* is indefinite, this example is an exception to the rule.

104. D’Anna. “Agreement”, p. 108.

105. Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 252.

106. Cf. Bettega “Agreement with plural”, p. 161.

107. Khan. “Object markers”, p. 470; Brustad. *The Syntax*, p. 55. However Brustad proves with the following example extracted from Cowell (*A reference grammar*, p. 425) that deflected agreement does not always occur in these cases: *hal-ʔalwān mā bināsbu baʕdon* “these colors don’t go together”. Notice, however, that this example shows a non-human controller.

Examples of strict agreement:

(44) *ən-nās yaʕni mənʕəthīn, mənʕəthīn ʕala baʕdon* “the people are open-minded; open-minded to each other” (*mənʕəthīn*: AP.PL, *baʕd-on*: PRON-PRON.PL)

### 3.4. Specificity

#### 3.4.1. Personal pronouns

The high level of individuation provided by personal pronouns seems to be the reason why in our data they only show strict agreement with their controllers. But in 4 of the 14 occurrences of personal pronouns the relative pronoun, which favours strict agreement, was also present (see section 3.2.2.). Personal pronouns are placed at the end of Corbett’s hierarchy for deflected agreement<sup>108</sup>.

Examples of strict agreement:

(45) *hənnen ən-nās ma byəʕrabu mn ən-nahʕr mubāʕaratan* “they, the people, do not drink directly from the river” (*hənnen*: PRON.3PL, *byəʕrabu*: VB.3PL)

(46) *bəl-maṭṭiʕa bən l-ʕnən bətlāʕi ʕanno ʕālam hənnen ʕaʕlan mānon ʕwām* “in the area between both, you find people who are not originally Damascene” (*hənnen*: PRON.3PL, *mān-on*: NEG-PRON.PL, *ʕwām*: ADJ.PL)

#### 3.4.2. Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns prominently individualize their controllers, hence almost all the instances in our data (6/7) show strict agreement. The only example of deflected agreement involves the short form *hal-*, which does not show gender and number. The strong deictic character of the demonstratives provides a high degree of prominence to the controller, as observed in Urban Tunisian<sup>109</sup>.

Examples of strict agreement:

(47) *lēʕ hadōl ən-nās həke byəʕʕmlu?* “why do these people do so?” (*hadōl*: DEM.PL, *byəʕʕmlu*: VB.3PL)

(48) *hadōl ən-nās ʕəlli ma biḥəʕtu əl-ḥijāb* “these people who don’t wear the hijab” (*hadōl*: DEM.PL, *biḥəʕtu*: VB.3PL).

In this example, individuation is prominently marked by the co-existence of the relative pronoun *ʕəlli* (see section 3.2.2.).

Example of deflected agreement:

(49) *hāda bikūn rabb əl-ʕālamīn ʕanno ʕafar-lon la-han-nās kəlla* “this is God who absolved all these people” (*kəll-a*: ADV-PRON.3FSG).

108. Cf. Corbett. *Hierarchies, targets*, p. 207.

109. Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 252. But the authors add that this is not the only possible reason for explaining the strict agreement: it could also result from morpho-syntactic principles.

This is the only example of deflected agreement found in the data. It perhaps can be explained by the presence of the quantifier *kəll* (see section 3.1.2.), which triggers deflected agreement.

Examples of demonstrative pronouns prominently marking the controllers and therefore attracting strict agreement are found in other varieties of Arabic, like Urban Tunisian<sup>110</sup>. Bettega's findings specifically concerning *nās* in Omani Arabic suggest the same conclusion<sup>111</sup>.

### 3.4.3. Locative constructions

In many cases where there are references to local places, strict agreement prevails. This could be explained by the fact that such references provide specific information about people in a definite place, thus clearly individualizing the group. Examples:

(50) *əl-ġālam ʔahyānan barra ʔaw hək ši bifakkru ʔanno ʕ-ʕalā ši bixawwef əl-ġālam* “the people sometimes, outside (Syria) or so, think that (Muslim) praying is something that scares the people” (*bifakkru*: VB.3PL)

The locative phrase *barra ʔaw hək ši* specifies that not everyone thinks in the way the sentence describes, only those abroad.

(51) *fi ġālam bəš-šām biʔūlu l-mara btəʕmel ʔhžāb la-žōza* “there are people in Damascus who say that the woman makes an amulet for her husband” (*biʔūlu*: VB.3PL)

The locative phrase *bəš-šām* specifies that the sentence refers only to people in Damascus.

A few examples of this kind include the preposition *ʕand* “with, at”:

(52) *bədda ktīr nās ʕandon byəʔdru yəʕāmalu maʕ əl-ġālam u yəhku maʕ əl-ġālam u hək* “many people there can mix with the people and talk to the people and so” (*ʕand-on*: PREP-PRON.PL, *byəʔdru*: VB.3PL, *yəʕāmalu*: VB.3PL, *yəhku*: VB.3PL)

The preposition *ʕand* followed by the anaphoric pronoun *-on* literally means “at that place, at the place where they (= these people) are”.

However, the following example does not show strict agreement despite the occurrence of *hnīke* “there”—perhaps due to the double presence of the quantifier *kəll*, which attracts deflected agreement:

110. *Idem*, p. 243.

111. Bettega. “Agreement with plural”, p. 168, fn. 17.

(53) *kəll əl-ʕālam ʔhnike lābse ʔabyaɖ, kəll əl-ʕālam* “all the people there wear white (clothes), all the people” (*lābse*: AP.FSG)<sup>112</sup>.

#### 3.4.4. *Distance & Specification*

It was mentioned in section 2.3. that mixed agreement clauses usually include a first target which is near to its controller and shows deflected agreement, and a second target distanced from the same controller and showing strict agreement. In many occasions, the distanced target(s) add further information about their controllers; therefore distance is regarded as a frequent factor for specification or individuation<sup>113</sup>. This phenomenon has been registered in other varieties, like Urban Tunisian<sup>114</sup>, Bahrain<sup>115</sup>, and southwestern Libyan<sup>116</sup>.

Examples:

(54) *ən-nās ʔtsāfer, trūh u təzi, ʕāret ʔtšūf ġēr ʔašyāʔ, fa-ʔtarru ʔanno ydawwru ʕala luġa tkūn ʔashal bət-taʕāmol* “the people travel, go and come, started seeing other things; therefore they were obliged to look for another language easier for the relation between them” (*tsāfer*: VB.3FSG, *trūh*: VB.3FSG, *təzi*: VB.3FSG, *ʕāret*: VB.3FSG, *tšūf*: VB.3FSG, *ʔtarru*: VB.3PL, *ydawwru*: VB.3PL)

The second clause, in which all verbs are in plural, explains the actions taken as a result of the situation mentioned in the first clause, in which all the verbs are in feminine singular.

(55) *ktīr nās ʔbtərʔoʕ dabke wəd-dabke b-sūrya masalan kəll nās byərʔʔsuwwa ʕəʕl* “many people dance dabka; and the dabka in Syria, every one dances it in one way” (*btərʔoʕ*: VB.3FSG, *byərʔʔsuww-*: VB.3PL).

In this example the first sentence shows deflected agreement, referring to the people as an undefined group; and the deflected agreement is reinforced by the presence of the quantifier *ktīr* (see section 3.1.1.). The second sentence, despite the presence of *kəll*, which emphasizes collectivity, shows strict agreement, since it specifically refers to the group of people mentioned in the first sentence, i.e. each of those who dance the dabka<sup>117</sup>.

112. A further mention of specification given by a locative, with an example of it showing strict agreement, is in D’Anna (“Agreement”, p. 108), referring to southwestern Libya.

113. Brustad. *The syntax*, p. 58.

114. Procházka & Gabsi. “Agreement”, p. 246.

115. Holes. *Dialect, culture*, p. 335.

116. D’Anna. “Agreement”, p. 109.

117. This example could fit in the group of mixed patterns described thus: “Mixed patterns also occur with S-V word order in sentences that do not refer to past events but express general assertions. Again the first part contains the general statement about people as a collective whole, followed by a sentence which tells us what the individual members of this group are doing” (Procházka & Gabsi “Agreement”, p. 246).

Finally, sometimes distanced anaphoric pronouns provide further specification about the controllers, as in the following:

(56) *fī ṣālam ʾktūr ʾbtāži ṣala hāda l-ṣātimāṣ masalan əl-ṣālam yəlli... halla? masalan ʔana bənzəl maṣon kəll ʾnhār žəmṣa* “there are many people who come to this meeting, for example, the people who... for example, I go with them every Friday daytime” (*btāži*: VB.3FSG, *maṣ-on*: PREP-PRON.PL).

In this case the first target (*btāži*) shows deflected agreement, probably fostered by the presence of *fī ktūr* (see section 3.1.1.), its clause referring to people as a collective group. The second clause shows strict agreement, specifying precisely those at the meeting to whom it refers: that is, those whom “I go with ... every Friday daytime”.

### 3.5. Definiteness

Definiteness was regarded by Khan as a feature of individuation<sup>118</sup>; but our data do not show any difference in agreement attending the controllers’ definition or non-definition. The reference to the controllers in many of our examples is definite, though clearly not specific or individual. For instance: (57) *mšān hēk yaṣni n-nās bətrūḥ* “this is why the people go” (*bətrūḥ*: VB.3FSG), (58) *hāda l-manṣar əl-ṣālam ləssa mu mṣawwade ṣalē bi-ṣōrəbba* “in Europe the people are not used to this view yet” (*mṣawwade*: AP.FSG).

Therefore, with regard to clauses involving the nouns *nās* and *ṣālam*, definiteness does not seem to be a determining factor in kind of agreement. The same phenomenon has been observed in Omani Arabic. Bettega found in his data a slightly higher percentage (8%) of strict agreement when controllers are defined; however these results are based on inanimate controllers<sup>119</sup>. It would be interesting to further study this question with non-human plural controllers in Damascus Arabic.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Agreement patterns with the nouns *nās* and *ṣālam* in Damascus Arabic show strict agreement prevailing, being used in 60.90% of the instances. Also, both nouns pattern similarly; and the number of instances of each is about the same (*nās*: 120 instances, *ṣālam*: 116 instances).

Some factors seem to promote one agreement type over the other; but all types of targets show preference for strict agreement. However, our limited number of

118. Khan. “Object markers”, p. 470. The author, however, points out that definiteness vs. indefiniteness is not the only factor related to the degree of individuation of a nominal.

119. Bettega. “Agreement with plural”, p. 161.

personal and demonstrative pronouns, and of passive participles, prevent us from taking these results as conclusive. More data is needed.

Agreement patterns of *nās* and *šālam* in Damascus are subordinated to semantic and/or pragmatic factors more than to the target's morphology, which is also true for other varieties of Arabic: the more individuated the term, the more chances for strict agreement<sup>120</sup>. By contrast, less specific referents are more likely perceived as grouped<sup>121</sup>; therefore with them deflected agreement is usually preferred.

Collectivity and generality are emphasized by the quantifier *kəll*, the reflexive pronoun *bašd*, and the combination of the existential particle *fī* with the quantifier *ktīr*. The important role attributed in previous studies to quantifiers in determining the type of agreement seems not to be the case in Damascus – except for *kəll* the presence of which clearly attracts deflected agreement. On the other hand, individualization and specification are emphasized by pronouns (personal, demonstrative, and relative), locative constructions, and adjectives.

Surprisingly, the distance between the target and the controller does not seem to be a key factor in determining the agreement of *nās* and *šālam*, except when the distance is greater than 4 words, in which case the chances of strict agreement clearly prevail. In other Arabic varieties distance has an important impact on the agreement; however, no references to *nās* and *šālam* have been found in this regard.

In most cases of mixed agreement, deflected agreement shifts to strict agreement — usually caused by the distance of the second target from its controller. Some examples indicate that distant targets give extra information about their controllers, providing them with a major measure of specification. A few cases have been registered in which all targets attract deflected agreement with the same controller; but we do not have cases of the shift from strict to deflected agreement. It would be very interesting to see if the shift takes place with other types of controllers (i.e. non-human).

A limited number of examples show that deflected agreement seems to be influenced by MSA. These examples particularly appear in religious contexts.

Finally, we have detected three factors which apparently do not have any effect on the agreement patterns: (1) word order (V-S / S-V), (2) definiteness, (3) and the existential particle *fī*. However, in combination with *ktīr* the latter does favor deflected agreement.

120. Cf. Holes. *Dialect, culture*, p. 327.

121. Belnap. *Grammatical agreement*, p. 76.

Although some common elements may attract one type of agreement or another, none of them are decisive. The concurrence of two or more elements does increase the chances for a specific type of agreement to occur; but, as this paper has shown, their presence is not a guarantee for that kind of agreement. Ultimately, as stated by Procházka & Gabsi<sup>122</sup>, on some occasions the agreement is based only on personal preference.

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122. Procházka & Gabsi. "Agreement", p. 258, fn. 22.

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