

## Basic word order: subject, verb, and object (SVO)

Simple sentences conform to the SVO order:

我中意佢 [ŋɔi33 dzəŋ33 yi33 kui33]  
I love him/her  
I love her.

佢中意我 [kui33 dzəŋ33 yi33 ŋɔi33]  
s/he loves me  
She loves me.

我去过 美国 [ŋɔi33 hui33 gɔ33 mi21 gək55]  
I go-EXP The U.S.  
I've been to the states.

我未曾去过 英国 [ŋɔi33 miən21 hui33 gɔ33 yein33 gək55]  
I not-yet go-EXP England  
I've not been to England.

Adverbs and adverbial phrases come before the verbs:

佢成日都讲笑嗰咁 [kui33 siaŋ22 ŋit215 du55 gəŋ55 hiau335 gɔ33 ya55]  
s/h always all joke SFP  
He makes jokes all the time.

我下个星期放假 [ŋɔi33 ha32 gɔi33 lein33 ki22 fəŋ33 ga55]  
I next CL week take-leave  
I'm off next week.

Aspect markers, verbal particles, and expressions of duration/frequency can be inserted between the verb and the object:

我睇出 诶 一 个 秘密 [ŋɔi33 hai55 tsut55 ə33 yit55 gɔi33 bi33 mit32]  
I find-out PFV one CL secret  
I've discovered a secret. (ə<sup>33</sup> = aspect marker)

佢已经读完书 [ŋɔi33 yi21 gein33 ək32 yən22 si33]  
s/he already read finish book  
She's finished her studies. (完 = verbal particle)

我学 诶 八年 英文 [ŋɔi33 hək32 ə33 bat33 nein22 yein33 mun225]  
I study PFV eight-year English  
I've been studying English for eight years. (八年 = duration phrase)

我<sup>21</sup>见过 几 次 面 [ŋɔi21 gein33 gɔ33 gi55 lu33 mein32]  
we see EXP several times face  
We've met a few times (几次 = frequency phrase)

## Deviation from SVO word order

**OSV/SOV order: fronting the object for emphasis:**

(a) Normal SVO order: 我未曾去过英国 (I've not been to England)

英国 我 未曾 去过 [yein33 gək55 ŋəi33 mian21 hui33 go33]  
England I not-yet go-EXP OSV order

我英国 未曾 去过 [ŋəi33 yein33 gək55 mian21 hui33 go33]  
I England not-yet go-EXP SOV order

(b) Normal SVO order: 我中意佢 (I love her)

佢 我中意 [kui33 ŋəi33 dzəŋ33 yi33]  
s/he I love OSV order

Note that there is no SOV for this example. In (a), it is clear that *I* is the subject and *England* is the object regardless their relative positions, but that is not true for the current case.

**OSV/SOV order: constructs with 都 and quantified object:**

两幅 画 我 都想 买 [ək55 fək55 va32 ŋəi33 du55 lian55 mai33]  
two-CL picture I all want buy OSV order

我 两幅 画 都想 买 [ŋəi33 fək55 fək55 va32 du55 lian55 mai33]  
I two-CL picture all want buy SOV order

I want to buy both pictures.

个个 我 都中意 [gəi33 gəi33 ŋəi33 du55 dzəŋ33 yi33]  
CL-CL I all love OSV order

我 个个 都中意 [ŋəi33 gəi33 gəi33 du55 dzəŋ33 yi33]  
I CL-CL all love SOV order

I love everyone!

**Verb+Subject order with intransitive verbs:**

今日 来 诶 好 多 大粒墨 [gim33 ŋit21 ləi33 ə33 həu55 ə33 ai32 lip55/33 mak21(ə55)]  
today come PFV very many big-mole  
A lot of big shots came today.

昨日 打 大风, 碌诶 好 几间 屋, 死诶 几个 人  
yesterday blow big-wind collapse-PFV very several-CL house die-PFV several-CL people  
There was a windstorm yesterday. Quite a few houses collapsed and several people died.  
[dəu21 ŋit21-ə33 a55 ai32 fəŋ33, ləm33 ə33 həu55 gi55 gan33 ək55, li55 ə33 gi55 gəi33 ŋin22]