

Word Order

In basic declarative sentences, Balti follows Subject-Object-Verb word order, as in (1):

(1) *SOV*

- a. diana rɪd-i sabax rjas
Diana Rida-GEN lesson started
'Diana started Rida's lesson.'
- b. mos tʃu tuɲet (Vanessa Ho; 2020/03/26; CM)
3SG.F.ERG water drinks
'She drinks water.'
- c. bilo-s ɲa: zʊs (Vanessa Ho; 2020/03/26; CM)
cat-ERG fish ate
'A cat ate a fish.'

No verb initial sentences (*VSO, *VOS) are allowed. Additionally subjects and objects also must not be separated by the verb (*SVO,*OVS).

(2) *Alternate Word Orders*

(Vanessa Ho; 2020/03/26; CM)

- a. *tuɲet mos tʃu
drinks 3SG.F.ERG water
- b. *tuɲet tʃu mos
drinks water 3SG.F.ERG
- c. *mos tuɲet tʃu
3SG.F.ERG drinks water
- d. *tʃu tuɲet mos
water drinks 3SG.F.ERG
'She drinks water.'

Finally, there is the case of object initial sentences (OSV). These sentences were regularly produced by the consultant without any prompting or intended emphasis. These OSV order sentences only occurred, however, when the verb required one of its arguments to be marked with the dative case despite that argument being an experiencer. This is the case with the verbs such as *toŋ* which translates directly as 'appear' but was routinely used to mean 'see without having intended to do so'. Note in (3) how Hlamo is marked as the grammatical object of the verb but, semantically, she is its experiencer. The ghost in question is the subject of the verb, but occurs after the object.

(3) ɭamo-la dre toɲet (Maya Sanchez; 2020/04/02; CM)

- ɭamo-DAT ghost appears
'Hlamo sees a ghost.' (lit. 'A ghost appears to Hlamo.')

This may be a case of topicalization for emphasis that was consolidated as the norm in these cases. (4) shows how OSV word order is also allowed for emphasizing the object in sentences with verbs that require an agent.

(4)

a. *Emphasis on the agent*

bzoŋo-wi zgo tʃaxs
cow.ERG door break.PST
'The cow broke the door.'

b. *Emphasis on the patient*

zgo bzoŋo-wi tʃaxs
door cow-ERG break.PST
'It's the door that the cow broke.' (Emphasis on the door)