follows a topic. Nonetheless, it can also occur in the middle of a sentence when it

This is somewhat similar to the use of *ne* in Mandarin, which often appears at the end

Then (they) got acquainted, the three brothers.

then np-I year-1 daughter three brothers in-

Deboh de-xi-ja non son-bai-xian 8ge.

When the internal topic appears as an ant-topi, after the comment, e.g.

Furthermore, there are occasions on which a topic, even in the presence of a comment,

such as see-event-topics may function without the company of a comment.

subject to individual preference and the choice can be freely made. 

Secondly, some discourse particle, mainly for introducing a whole phrase in contrast.

Such use of *bdo* is common construction. First of all, the external topic *chi bo* may function much like a

often instrumental in identifying a topic, they are not effective indicators of topic-

marking the internal topic and the external topic, respectively. While these markers are

for structuring information. The language is equipped with two clitics, *ge* and *bo* for

Topic-comment constructions occur parasitally in Primi, being a basic device for

2. Defining the Topic-comment construction

is proposed.

Before we proceed, a working definition for the topic-comment construction

double topic construction, chienew comment construction, and embedded topic-comment

construction based on the study in Ding (1996). These include: basic topic-comment-construction

constructions in Primi a Qiangic language exclusively spoken in southwestern China,

majority of Sino-Tibetan languages. This paper will describe a variety of topic-comment

in the literature. Topic-prominence is indeed an important communicative between the

languages such as Mandarin, Japanese, Korean, and Lluno are topic-prominent. As a

In their typological study of subject and topic, Li and Thompson (1976) note that
The internal topic in (1) is clearly a pragmatic topic which the sentence is about. However, occurring after the comment, the topic cannot be analyzed in terms of the topic-comment construction. The sentence represents a minor type of structure, an anti-topic construction.

As morphosyntactic marking does not provide a reliable means for recognizing a pragmatic topic in Primmi, it is beneficial to advance an explicit definition for the topic-comment construction. A working definition for the construction is proposed as follows:²

Under a specific discourse context, a topic-comment construction is identified if a sentence can be divided into two parts such that the focus domain is realized on/within the second part only. Further, the semantic content of the two parts should allow establishing an aboutness relation between them. The first part, outside the focus-domain, represents or contains the topic of the sentence, and the second part serves as a comment about this topic.

Note that scene-setting topics may, or may not, occur in a topic-comment relation, depending on the construal of an aboutness relation.³ The two central criteria for the topic-comment construction are the identifiability of a narrow focus domain on the comment and the feasible construal of the comment being about the topic.

3. The basic structure of topic-comment construction

As shown below, the basic structure of the topic-comment construction is quite simple:

```
Topic-comment Construction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>{NP} + {ggee} + {bbo}</td>
<td>Clause</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Figure 1: The basic structure of the topic-comment Construction

² The proposal makes reference to focus, as discussed by Lambrecht (1994).
³ Kirkpatrick (1996) has rightly pointed out that a scene-setting topic without a comment should not be considered as a topic-comment construction. However, sometimes it is possible to have a scene topic in the topic-comment construction, as will be shown later.
For being tall
(a) The tree is certainly tall
(b) The hill is certainly tall

A sentence as a topic

Less frequently, a topic can also be a clause. A clauseal topic often receives a clitic

Which (why) recognize (here as crafty)
Only the main pile (why) mean (it with) call the extremity to the mountains

Kind of topic is found in several Latin proverbs. It is often appears as an extramural topic, e.g.

The golden fleece, (he) just hides (himself) in the wood

Bears are certainly harmful animals

(a) internal topic

(b) external topic

(c) associated

(d) external

Are presented in the following with the topic constituent underscored:

Also be considered as a kind of topic, "operative topic". Examples for the variety of topics
Furthermore, the complex topic 886 combined from 886 and the instrumental one may
Intricate one whose topical status is already established in the discourse situation
be marked by 886 or 886. A topic without morphosyntactic marking must be an

component, and it usually occurs at the very beginning of a simple sentence. The topic can

necessarily expressed explicitly, however. The topic, if overt, always precedes the

The construction comprises two essential parts: a topic and a comment. The former is not
b Hon_quêê xi bbo diá ko_quêê xi yon.  
in ner_side exist ExT now outer_side exist Assr  
(Since) there exists an 'innerland', certainly there exists an 'outerland'.

(5) Conditional clauses serving as a topic  
a Bbó pián bbo hêaggi tea-xii?  
Dc flee ExT where fr.sp-go  
Well, (if we) run away, where (should we) go?  
b Ma'pian bbô nee tea-lhigi ma'gaî.  
N+flee ExT Dc fr.sp-release N+Vlt  
(If you) don't flee, (you) won't extricate (from the flood).  
c Lô tea-bià là née dde-präa ma'gaî.  
work fr.sp-work also 2s to.sp-meet N+Vlt  
Even (if you) work, you won't be rewarded.

The pragmatic function of clausal topic is to introduce a discourse setting for the comment in the following clause. As such, it is typically expressed as an external topic. An important function of clausal topics is to encode the topic as a conditional clause, illustrated in (5). Unless followed by other words with a rich pragmatic content, as with the contrastive adverb la "also" in (5)c, the conditional clause must be encoded as an external topic.

4. Chained Comment Construction

When a sentence contains a topic shared by several comments, the information structure of the sentence is identified as a Chained Comment Construction. The topic constituent in the Chained Comment Construction is explicitly expressed once and often receives some morphosyntactic marking, e.g.

(6)a Lhasiân ggee bbo [r önnddiân bbo la ddiôn yon],  
Lhasian InT Dc lowland Dc also exist המד נ ve св  
[g önnddiân bbo la ddiôn yon].  
highland Dc also exist מג נ ve св  
The 'Lhasian' tree, (it) is found in the low land, (as well as) in the high land.

b Lûubbon ggee [sianbbûn dëa_con], [bbûn], [lealiân ggûân].  
China fir InT tree one kind radially thick very tall  
The China fir is a kind of tree, radially thick, and very tall.

As shown in (6)b, the chained comments need not have parallel structures. What is required for the comments in the construction is that there are at least two comments which provide additional information about the initial constituent, the topic. Such