

# A Functional Approach to Conditionals in Peking Mandarin

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## **Abstract**

The present research explores the syntactic and semantic characteristics of conditional expressions in colloquial Peking Mandarin from a functional perspective, adopting the concept that the conditional is a conceptual category, which inevitably relates to and interacts with other conceptual domains. Based on the idea that “recurrent similarity of form must reflect similarity in meaning”, the thesis takes the Semantic Map Model as its major theoretical and methodological framework to capture the connection between the conditional and other functional categories as manifested in the data from Peking Mandarin as well as other Sinitic and non-Sinitic languages. It takes a bottom-up approach to the construction of semantic map, starting with data from a single language, i.e., Peking Mandarin, and progressively introducing more comparative data from other languages to yield a semantic map that not only helps to elucidate how conditionals work in Chinese, but also enjoys universal validity across different languages with regard to the polysemy involving conditionals. Based on the resulting semantic map, the thesis discusses various issues pertaining to conditionals in Mandarin, particularly its classification and characterization. An attempt to dynamicize the semantic map is also made with the examination of historical texts in Chinese.