

The Usages of 呢

Part 1

Used in Questions

1. Topic + 呢

When you start a topic, and ask bounce-back questions, you can use “呢” at the end.

For example,

I like noodles, what about you?

我 喜欢 吃 面条，你 呢？

Wǒ xǐhuan chī miàntiáo, nǐ ne?

You are from Shanghai, what about your husband?

你 是 上海 人，你 老公 呢？

Nǐ shì Shànghǎi rén, nǐ lǎogōng ne?

You are not free this Saturday, how about next Saturday?

(你) 这 周 六 没 时间，下 周 六 呢？

(Nǐ) zhè zhōu liù méi shíjiān, xià zhōu liù ne?

2. Asking where someone or something is

When you ask where someone or something is, you can use “呢”. For instance,

Where is my phone?

我 的 手机 呢？

Wǒ de shǒujī ne?

Where is Xiao Ming? Everybody is waiting for him.

小 明 呢？大 家 都 在 等 他。

Xiǎo Míng ne? Dàjiā dōu zài děng tā.

3. Who/What/Which/Where/When/How + 呢

If you ask a question with an interrogative word, such as who, what, which, where, when, how,

you can use “呢” to soften the tone. For instance,

Whose book is this?

这是谁的书呢?

Zhè shì shéi de shū ne?

What did he say?

他说了些什么呢?

Tā shuō le xiē shénme ne?

Which cup is yours?

哪个杯子是你的呢?

Nǎ ge bēizi shì nǐ de ne?

Where did they go?

他们去哪儿了呢?

Tāmen qù nǎr le ne?

When will you go to Beijing?

你什么时候去北京呢?

Nǐ shénme shíhou qù Běijīng ne?

How come I didn't know that?

我怎么不知道呢?

Wǒ zěnmē bù zhīdào ne?

4. 是+Option 1 + 呢, 还是 + Option 2 + 呢

When you use the sentence pattern “是……还是……” to ask a question, you can use “呢” at the end to soften the tone. For example,

Would you like tea or coffee?

你是喝茶呢, 还是喝咖啡呢?

Nǐ shì hē chá ne, hái shì hē kāfēi ne?

Do you agree on this matter or not?

这件事情, 你是赞成呢, 还是反对呢?

Zhè jiàn shìqíng, nǐ shì zànréng ne, háishì fǎnduì ne?

5. Verb 不 Verb + 呢

Adj 不 Adj + 呢

When you ask a question that has the sentence pattern “Verb不Verb” or “Adj不Adj”, you can also use “呢” at the end to soften the tone. Let’s look at some examples.

Will we have a class or not?

明天 我们 上 不 上 课 呢?

Míngtiān wǒmen shàng bu shàng kè ne?

Will you go to the seaside?

你 去 不 去 海 边 呢?

Nǐ qù bu qù hǎibiān ne?

Is it hot there?

你 那里 热 不 热 呢?

Nǐ nàlǐ rè bu rè ne?

Is this watermelon sweet or not?

这 个 西 瓜 甜 不 甜 呢?

Zhè ge xīguā tián bu tián ne?

Part 2

Expressing actions in progress

When an action is in progress, you can use “呢” to say someone is doing something or something is happening now. It’s often used with “正”, “在”, “正在” and “着”. For instance,

He is sleeping.

他 睡 觉 呢。

Tā shuì jiào ne.

He is reading.

他 在 看 书 呢。

Tā zài kàn shū ne.

It's raining outside.

外面 下 着 雨 呢。

Wàimiàn xià zhe yǔ ne?

Part 3

Making a Statement

If you state something in a generalization tone, you can use “呢” at the end. For example,

He got a lot out of this trip.

他 这 次 旅 行 收 获 不 小 呢。

Tā zhè cì lǚxíng shōuhuò bù xiǎo ne.

The fish in this lake are quite big.

这 个 湖 里 的 鱼 可 大 呢。

Zhè ge húli de yú kě dà ne.

That medicine does really work.

那 个 药 效 果 好 得 很 呢。

Nà ge yào xiàoguǒ hǎo de hěn ne.

Part 4

Used to Pause

When there is a slight pause between two phrases, you can use “呢” to soften the tone.

For instance,

Buy it if you like it; If not, don't buy it.

喜 欢 呢, 就 买; 不 喜 欢 呢, 就 别 买。

Xǐhuān ne, jiù mǎi; bù xǐhuan ne, jiù bié mǎi.

Hurry up if you wan to go there.

你 要是 想 去 呢, 就 快 一点儿。

Nǐ yàoshi xiǎng qù ne, jiù kuài yì diǎnr.