Recitation A

The Right Sound

Designers are increasingly paying attention to making products that make less noise. Steve Jobs, for example, did not want to use a fan to cool his first computer. He thought a fan would make too much noise. Since then, there has been a broad movement to make products that are quieter.

The reason for doing this is clear: noise is a problem that affects us all. In 2011 the World Health Organization published a report on health and the environment. The main environmental cause of bad health is air pollution. The second cause is noise pollution. Making a quieter environment is good for people and for businesses, too. Quieter cars, printers, washing machines, and airplanes may be more expensive, but these products consume less energy. That makes them cheaper to operate in the long run.

Quieter airplanes, as one example, are better for everyone. People who live near airports are happier when noise decreases. People who fly on quieter planes find traveling less stressful, too. In the workplace, machinery and air conditioning that is quieter may be a bit more expensive, but it increases concentration and reduce fatigue.

In general, noise is bad, but complete silence is not good either. For pedestrians and people who are blind, quiet electric cars and bicycles can be dangerous. It is important for such vehicles to make at least some sound for safety reasons.

There are other cases where sound is desirable even though it is not necessary. Car manufacturers work hard so that the closing of the car door sounds just right. They want to produce a sound that produces a feeling of high quality.

For designers, the goal is not silence, but getting the sound right. And most of the time, "right" means quieter and making less noise.

(296 words)