



Before Proofreading

In 2021, as a volunteer, I attended a charity summer camp organized by the Smile Angel Foundation. At the camp, I met a group of children with cleft lips and palates who had bunny-like lips and were happy to come up to me and share the smallest things in their daily lives or tell me jokes. Unfortunately, due to a congenital deformity of the mouth, their words were not clearly pronounced. I couldn't control my eyes to look at the defective parts of their mouths. If I didn't hear them clearly, they raised their voice and increased their volume, as if talking was a very tiring and laborious task. I felt sorry for them, for they were born different from ordinary children. I helped them carry their dinner plates and even tie their shoes though they could do these things by themselves.

The problem is that there is an implied logic here -- I am the strong and then take pity on the weak as the strong.

As part of the closing ceremony, the children put on a unique play "Jing Hua Yuan" in a professional theater. I watched them speak out large sections of lines fluently, memorize the sequence of the play and stand on stage well, and remain calm in the face of the crowded audience. Without fear, they let the microphone amplify their voices around the theater. It was hard to imagine that this was the result of just one week of practice. I was surprised to find that they were actually not different from other children, and even did better than some peers. I suddenly realized that they were not weak and did not need pity or too much care from others, because it would take away their chance to temper themselves and would make them less likely to integrate into society. If we worry these children will be nervous on stage because they can't speak clearly and thus not let them participate in the performance, they tend to think that they are defective in others' eyes and have a sense of inferiority. This is not what they need.

But what do they really need? I began to think. The foundation sponsors children with cleft lip and palate from poor families and provides them with surgical treatment. The specialists teach them the correct way to pronounce words. However, a few weeks are not enough to really master the articulation skills and have clear pronunciation. Back at home, they still need to practice for some time to achieve satisfactory effects. The biggest problem is how to achieve effective practice at home. Through my research, I found that there is a mutual need between the four groups of people: Children with cleft lip and palate, their parents, specialists and volunteers. So, if they can be integrated together, the benefits will be maximized. For example, a patient may need

expert guidance in the process of speech training, and the expert can obtain data from their questions to conduct more in-depth research and finally provide better solutions. In order that patients can achieve the desired effect through interaction with others, I took all these factors into account in my professional program and built a web-based platform for children to engage in continuous voice training in a game-like manner, so that they can gradually make a clear and correct voice until they are cured.

Design is a global language that I can use to connect with strangers. I need to try to understand what people are doing, what they are feeling, and what they are thinking. At all times, I should look at all people equally and think about their inner needs. I want to be a real designer and create more scientific and diverse ways of living.