

A brief report about the Special Education Program (English) at Shizuoka University :  
Reviewing numbers of enrollments for the past three years

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**A brief report about the Special Education Program (English) at Shizuoka University**

~ Reviewing numbers of enrollments for the past three years ~

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**ABSTRACT**

Special Education programs started in 2020 and one of them was specially designed for enhancing English skills for students at Shizuoka University. It was also introduced at the same time of the new general English program was introduced in order to encourage students to take more elective general English classes. Although none of the students have yet completed any of these programs, this brief report aims to briefly review the special education program (English) for the past three years. The data shows that the first year in 2020 of the program (English) recorded the highest enrollment numbers while the second year in 2021 recorded the lowest enrolment numbers. In order to increase the numbers of enrollment for this program, more advertisement of this program by the lecturers who particularly teach general English subjects will be needed.

**Keywords:** EFL, ESP, learner's motivation, and English curriculum

**1. INTRODUCTION**

In 2020, the new general English curriculum at Shizuoka University was introduced. Although there were many new features under the new curriculum, this report focuses on briefly reviewing the special education program (English). The idea of introducing the special programs came from Shimane University (a national university) where some special education programs were already provided to their students. Their programs were not only English programs but also other programs such as geopark study, tourism education, field education and so forth (Shimane University, n.d.). One of the authors of this report with other colleagues visited Shimane University when the new general English program was discussed in the working group and learnt how to operate the special programs from Shimane University. In addition, when the especial education program (English) was introduced, the new general English program was also introduced. Introducing the special education program (English) under the new general English program would encourage students to take more

elective general English programs. It has been three years after the special English program was introduced at Shizuoka University and it is a good opportunity to review how the program goes through over 3 years.

## **2. Literature review**

There are universities which offer similar programs to special education programs of Shizuoka University. The authors compare the similar programs in other universities before we discuss our program. Taira (2016) explains the case of the minor program across all departments of Osaka city university. One of their aims of introducing the minor program is to put strength on English education for students more than ever before. Under the minor program of Osaka city university, students' major study is given a priority and thus some credits from the minor program will not be transferred into their major credits. In other words, in order to complete the minor program, students will need to study some extra subjects on the top of their majors. In addition, to officially complete the minor program, students need to pass all credits for their major first and then the minor program will be officially credited. Tanaka (2011) compares minor programs across five national universities in Japan. For instance, the minor program of Fukui university aims to deepen and expand liberal arts knowledge based on knowledge gained from each student major subjects. In order to complete the minor program, students are able to complete the program within taking all general education subjects. Mizuno (2019) introduces both English and Chinese courses in the global human recourse development program of Kagawa University. These course aim to educate students to be global people in particular through study abroad programs. In order to compete the program, students need to take an intensive class, some global related subjects, and study abroad including passing some mainstream subjects at the university where the students go. Niino (2014) explains a language minor program at Rikkyo University in Japan. The program was made in order to motivate students' motivation to learn languages because of the new curriculum started in 2010 at Rikkyo university. Under the new curriculum, the number of compulsory language credits which students needed to take were reduced and thus all language subjects were completed within a year after the first-year students entered into the university. To encourage students to keep learning language subjects even after they move to the second year, the language minor program contributed to motivate students to keep learning language subjects.

## **3. Special Education Program (English)**

Although there are several special education programs in Shizuoka University, this brief report focuses on the English program. The aim of the special education program (English) is to master

advanced level English proficiency in order to work for companies which English is highly used. It also aims to prepare for study abroad by taking general English subjects offered to undergraduate students of all departments (Shizuoka University, n.d.) . When this program was introduced, some features were needed to be considered. First of all, the program should not be very difficult and neither be too easy for undergraduate students to complete. If the program is too difficult for the students to complete, it will not encourage students to enroll the program. If the program is too easy to complete, it will not add an extra value for in particular advanced English level students to enroll the program. Therefore, to decide the target level of English proficiency to complete was an important point to be discussed before this program was introduced.

In the end, we decided to aim for students to score over TOEIC 700 when students complete the program. There would be both positive and negative opinions for using TOEIC score within this program since there are other English exams which could be introduced in this program. The reason for using TOEIC score in this program is that our general English program adopts TOEIC scores to enroll many elective English classes. In addition, all of the first year students are required to take TOEIC test at the end of their first semester. Therefore, we wanted students to take higher proficiency level general English classes by encouraging students to take the TOEIC exam. In addition, Japanese companies often seek for future employees whether they have higher TOEIC scores or not. Thus, those who hold higher TOEIC scores will give an opportunity to have more options for students to get either well-paid jobs or working in big companies.

Second of all, the program only requires students to take general English subjects to complete the program. Some extra activities of using English could be added but the working group considered those extra activities would not motivate students to enroll this program. The table 1 provided below shows requirements for the completion of this program.

Table 1

Total credits to complete	Over 12 credits in total	TOEIC level to enroll
Must include these subjects (5 credits in total)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Communication (2 credits)</li> <li>• English Practicum (1 credit)</li> <li>• General English III (2 credits)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> <li>• Under TOEIC 500</li> <li>• Over TOEIC 700</li> </ul>
Over 4 credits including these subjects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESP I (Study Abroad) (2 credits)</li> <li>• ESP II (Region) (2 credits)</li> <li>• Academic English (2 credits)</li> <li>• Business English (2 credits)</li> <li>• Intensive English A/B/C/D (2 credits each)</li> <li>• Overseas English Study A/B</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• N/A</li> <li>• Over TOEIC 500</li> <li>• Over TOEIC 600</li> <li>• Over TOEIC 600</li> <li>• Over TOEIC 600</li> <li>• N/A</li> </ul>

(The authors summarized the contents from <https://web.hedc.shizuoka.ac.jp/special-english/>)

Most of the general English subjects in Table 1 require students their TOEIC exam scores for enrollment. To complete this program, students need to take over TOEIC 700 scores which is a requirement for enrolling General English III.

#### 4. Data & DISCUSSION

In this section, the numbers of actual enrollment for the special program (English) are shown in Table 2 and brief discussions are made.

Table 2

	Humanities & Social Sciences	Education	Science	Engineering	Agriculture	Informatics	Regional Development	Total
2022 entrance	12	9	2	7	9	7	3	49
2021 entrance	8	5	2	2	1	3	1	22
2020 entrance	12	8	6	48	9	13	3	99
Total	32	22	10	57	19	23	7	170

Table 2 shows enrollment numbers of the special Education program (English) for the past three years as of 2023, April. 170 students in total have enrolled for the English program. At this stage, there are no students who have completed the program since to complete this program, students need to complete not only the requirements of this program but also they need to complete enough credit points to finish their degree. Since this program started in 2020, there is no one who satisfies these requirements at this stage and therefore we are not able to show how many students complete this program. To look at table 2 in depth, the first year when this program started in 2020 has the highest numbers of students' enrollment while the second year in 2021 was the lowest of it. The third year in 2022 slightly recovered the numbers of enrollment but it is still nearly the half of the first year enrollment in 2020. To look at numbers of enrollment by each department, Faculty of Engineering comes on the top for the past three years and Faculty of Humanities & Social science comes to the second.

In 2020, the total numbers of enrollment for the English program were dramatically reduced as Table 2 showed. The reason for this would be less advertisement of this program for students this year compared to the pervious year. In 2020, the new general English curriculum started and all special education programs were also started. All special education programs were advertised on the website and distributed paper-based pamphlets to students. However, the second year in 2021, although the websites still existed, the English program was not advertised as much as it was in 2021.

It is also important to consider that under this program, general English subjects are the main source to complete. Thus by support and collaboration by those who teach general English classes are necessary to encourage the students to enroll this program.

## 5. Conclusion

This report briefly reviewed the special education program (English) for the past three years since it was introduced. For the past three years, the first year in 2020 recorded the highest enrollment numbers while the second year in 2021 recoded the lowest enrolment numbers. To increase the numbers of students' enrollment, more advertisement of this program will be needed by lecturers who particularly teach general English classes. This brief report does not include how many students actually complete the special education program (English). This is because none of students who have enrolled this program are yet satisfied with all the requirements to complete this special program. Another follow up report which includes the numbers of completion of this special program is still needed in the future and we will try to make another report when it is ready.

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