

## **Rudolf Reinelt**

Suggested and approved by Cecilia Silva (OLE SIG President), and present officers Margit Krause-Ono, Bertlinde Vögel, Maria Gabriela Schmidt, Adiene Roque de Hishiyama, Eric Fortin, Miguel Campos, Carlos Budding, Pornsri Wright, Anja Hopf

The officers of JALT Other Language Educators (OLE) SIG are honored to recommend Rudolf Reinelt for consideration for the JALT Lifetime Achievement Award 2025.

Over the past 25 years, we have had the distinct pleasure of working closely with Rudolf Reinelt and have witnessed firsthand his outstanding contributions to language education, research, and leadership — especially in his long-standing role as OLE SIG Coordinator for almost twenty-five years and as JALT officer and continuous supporter in later years.

As the founder and organizer of OLE SIG, Rudolf Reinelt has consistently demonstrated an unwavering commitment to excellence for more than thirty years. His impact on the SIG and its members has been profound and lasting. Since its inception, Rudolf Reinelt has become the ambassador and face of pluri- and multilingualism (using the term LanguageS) within JALT.

### **Leadership within JALT - his work as Coordinator/President of OLE SIG**

Rudolf founded the OLE SIG in the early 1990s. Under his leadership, the SIG became a vital platform for educators to present their work and connect with colleagues across Japan.

OLE SIG started at an after-conference get-together of attendants involved in teaching and learning of languages other than English at the 1993 JALT conference in Ohmiya, Rudolf was asked to form an official group to represent yet other languages in JALT and give them more clout within JALT. It was Malcolm Swanson who suggested to him as being a suitable person for that role.

OLE SIG finally became a representing group within JALT and at the EBMs when its constitution was accepted in 1997.

From 1997 onwards, Rudolf, as coordinator of OLE SIG, has continually attended EBMs, and missed extremely few of them. OLE SIG functioned on the condition that it fulfill all requirements as a full (not just an affiliate!) SIG: full EBM attendances, 4 or more newsletters per year, an OLE SIG Forum at each national conference, etc., except for membership (whose amount would always stay low due to double membership in other language teacher associations as well.) Due to the inability to meet the membership requirement, OLE SIG remained for some decades without voting rights.

During the time when Rudolf was coordinator of JALT OLE SIG until 2017, the SIG could boast quite a few achievements, such as the following:

- Hundreds of presentations at various events during JALT conferences, its own one-day conferences, and elsewhere.
- In contrast to SIGs with a sizable number of seasoned writers, who are able to put out well-researched and well-written articles and books in no time, OLE SIG has been able to activate many unpublished teachers and even learners of other languages for the first time to become interested in and attend JALT events and even present and publicize their ideas, projects, and research beyond their own language teaching societies, not a few members for the first time,
- Rather than starting its own projects, OLE SIG has provided a platform for research and a real community of practice across languages,
- Beginning in about 2005 and lasting until 2014, Rudolf organized Embassy Panels under the umbrella of the OLE SIG at the national JALT-Conferences for about 10 years, with presentations by ambassadors or the cultural attachés of embassies.

Rudolf Reinelt paved the way for Multilingualism in JALT. His intent was always to bring different languages together. At the JALT National Conferences he made sure that there were at least three forums (German – French – Spanish) plus an OLE-SIG Forum, and sometimes even a Multilingual Forum, to give other languages a platform to perform.

OLE SIG members remember his analog OLE newsletters that included contributions in at least four different languages (Japanese, German, English, and Spanish), and often in French, too, and sometimes even in Korean, Chinese, Bahasa Indonesian, Russian, and others. He also encouraged the members of the SIG to translate the text of the conference theme into their various native languages, as well as for announcements on the JALT HP.

In language teaching, so many ways of teaching and different approaches overlap which cannot be confined to the teaching of only one certain language. To make practitioners and researchers aware of it, to pass this on and create a synergy was one of his (main) goals, creating a real community of practice.

There is no other group(ing) either in JALT or in Japan similar to OLE SIG where different languages at the same time are represented and their speakers/ teachers come together, present and discuss their approaches and teaching methods in their different languages. In all other organizations languages are compartmentalized or serialized.

At JALT, many more teachers of English than before have a non-English background, which inevitably leads to different topics and ways of dealing with demanding situations in their teaching. JALT OLE SIG and its multilingual approach might be an inspirational space for this growing group of teachers.

#### **Mentorship as OLE-SIG Coordinator and beyond**

As a mentor, Rudolf Reinelt is both motivational and supportive. He has a gift for encouraging colleagues—especially early-career educators—to publish and present. His guidance always comes with constructive feedback and a strong belief in the potential of others. Many officers and members credit Rudolf Reinelt as being a key figure in their professional development.

His leadership has also been defined by inclusivity and inspiration. As he often says, “The sky is the limit—you can do whatever you think would be good for the organization and for representing other languages.”

#### **Contribution as a Researcher**

Rudolf Reinelt’s scholarly contributions to the field of language education are both prolific and influential. His work has advanced our understanding of:

- Learner activation in the context of foreign language education
- The linguistic and pedagogical foundations of language learning (particularly German, but extending to Korean, French, Spanish, and others)
- Innovative approaches to language teaching and related teacher education

His research reflects not only a deep academic understanding but also a practical approach to effective language instruction. In his research and as author of German textbooks he challenged the assumptions and inspired many discussions.

To date, Rudolf Reinelt has authored or contributed to 20 books, published over 200 papers and articles, and delivered more than 300 presentations at conferences.

#### **Enduring Impact**

His unwavering work as leader and mentor for multilingualism within JALT bore fruit: Consciously or unconsciously teachers incorporated other approaches in their teaching. It also bore new fruit within OLE SIG: Namely, the Multilingual Café of OLE SIG, an event which tries to make the multilingualism within JALT and Japan more visible. In other words, currently OLE SIG continues the way Rudolf opened to us.

Rudolf Reinelt's influence continues well beyond his formal academic position. Even after retiring from his university role in 2022, he remains active as the leader of the Matsuyama Chapter. His work continues to inspire colleagues and attract new members to OLE SIG and JALT.

His vision, dedication, and remarkable accomplishments make him a truly deserving candidate for the JALT Lifetime Achievement Award. His legacy will continue to inspire future generations of language educators in Japan and beyond.

### **Testimonials**

"I am deeply grateful to write about the man who opened the doors of JALT and the OLE SIG to me. Thanks to Rudolf Reinelt, I had the opportunity to present the findings of my doctoral thesis. He was a light in my academic journey, offering guidance, motivation, and a platform to grow. His charisma, creativity, and above all, his passion, continue to inspire. If I had to mention something specific, his innovative repertoire of ideas for the titles of the forums, conferences, and other events organized by JALT OLE SIG would undoubtedly be at the top of my list. Rudolf Reinelt's legacy is not only in his ideas and leadership, but in how he has supported so many educators in taking their first steps into academic presentations and publications."

"Rudolf is, in the German community as well as in the JALT community, a well-known personality - and in both with his rather flamboyant dressing style and his creative teaching approaches. His extraordinary gift that allowed him to learn Japanese in a very short time and to a high level brought him quite some admiration from German colleagues (Reinelt 2000). (Rudolf Reinelt once invited a Japanese language specialist to present and performed an impressive 45-minute simultaneous interpretation from Japanese into English—neither of which are his native languages !!!) Little does the German community know about his extraordinary versatile command of English, which would have astonished them further. One German colleague suggested back in 2000 already, that Rudolf should get a medal of merit from Germany for all his consistent work in changing the image of Germany in a foreign country."

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