



IDENTIFYING VOLITIONAL STRATEGIES OF DISTANCE LEARNERS

Rebecca Pientka, Melina Klepsch, Judith Bach & Tina Seufert; Ulm University

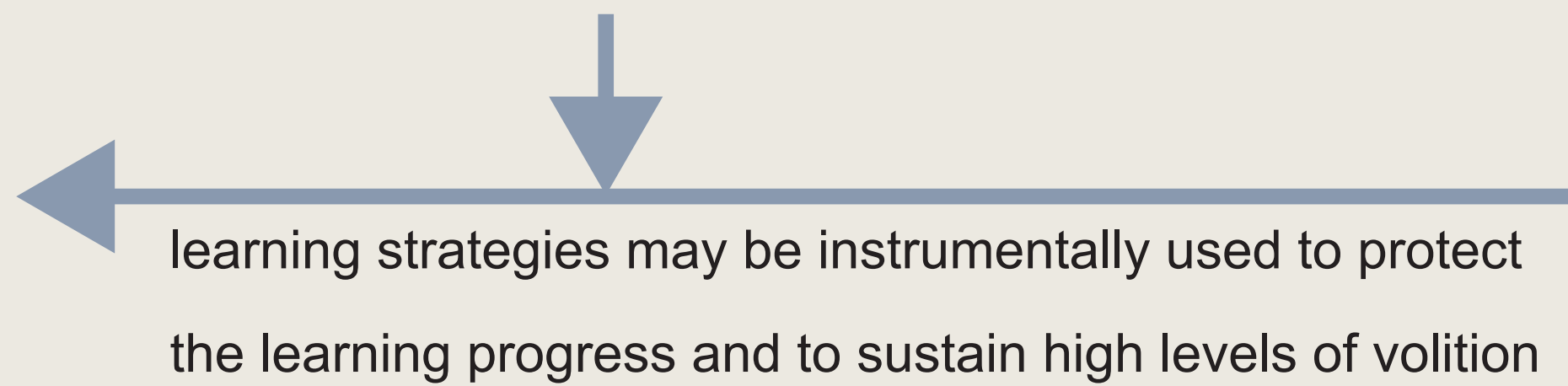
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

VOLITION = all (learning) activities directed toward an intended goal (Achtziger & Gollwitzer 2010)
→ crucial factor for successful learning in distance learning settings
→ needed to initiate & maintain learning processes (Corno, 1993).

SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

= process of taking control of and evaluating one's own learning and behavior (e.g. Schmitz & Wiese, 2006)

→ a tight interplay between volition and learning strategies seems highly plausible but has not been conceptualized explicitly.



LEARNING STRATEGIES

= cognitive, metacognitive or resource oriented (Weinstein & Mayer, 1986)

→ relevant predictor of study success in higher education

VOLITIONAL STRATEGIES

= strategies, used by learners in their learning context, to initiate, execute & continue their learning process

→ even when obstacles arise

→ intentionally and instrumentally aligned to the execution and maintenance of learning processes

→ important factor for a successful learning process (Schmitz & Wiese, 2006).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Which volitional strategies are used by distance students to a) initiate learning activities, b) maintain and c) stay tuned even when difficulties arise?
Are there volitional strategies used by distance students, which are consequently used in all three phases?

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

32 adult learners ($M_{Age} = 29.8$; $SD = 7.1$; 14 male) were interviewed all studied in a distance learning program at a German university

MATERIALS

data collection through semi-structured interviews
previously validated by interviews with 7 other distance learners

interview was structured in three phases:

- 1st phase: initiate learning activities
- 2nd phase: maintain
- 3rd phase: stay tuned when difficulties arise

for each phase we asked:

- (1) what kind of volitional difficulties the students normally experience
- (2) which strategies they have for dealing with these difficulties

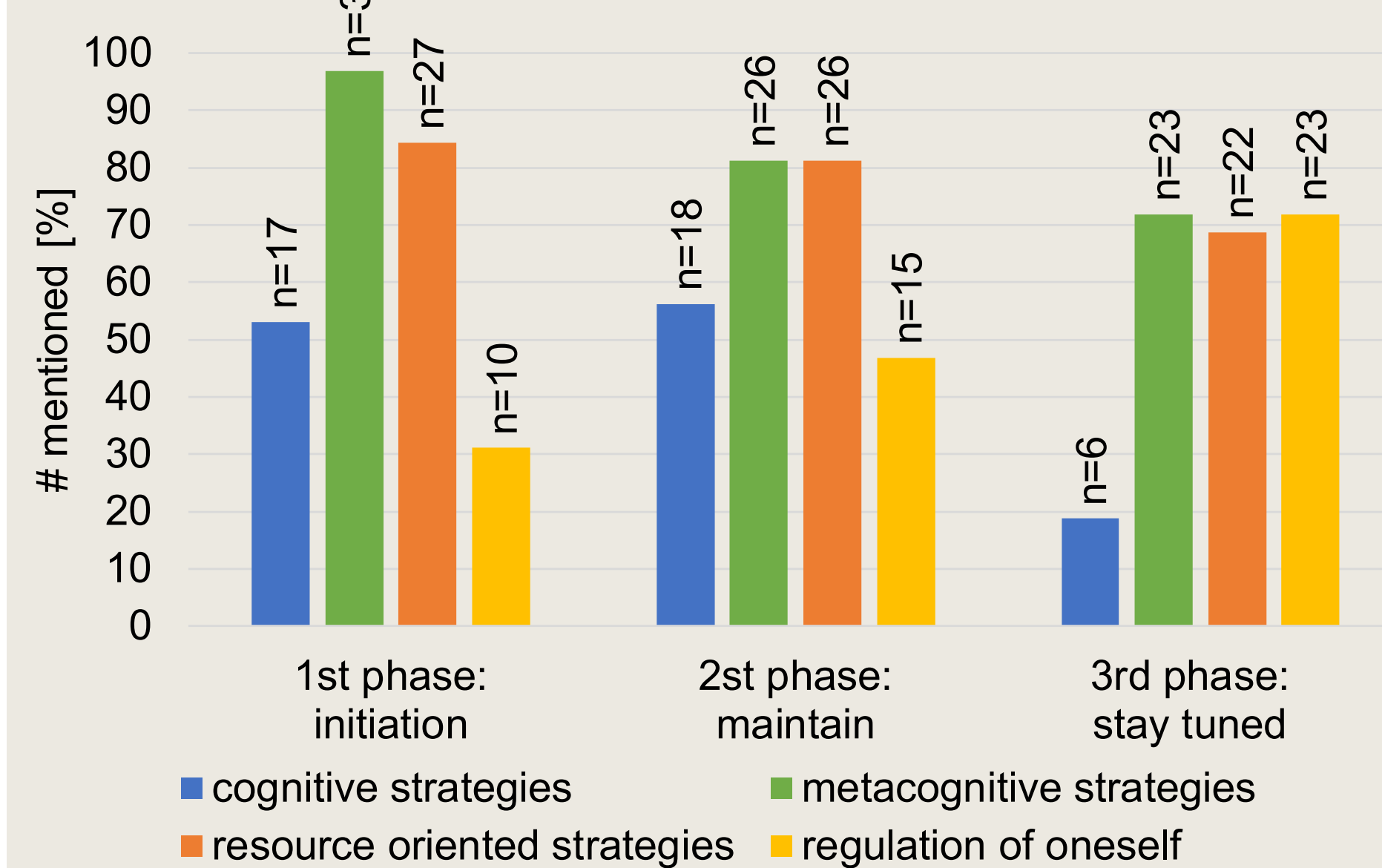
PROCEDURE

data collection: April until July 2017
face-to-face or online interview of about 25-35 minutes
interviews: audio-taped, transcribed verbatim and analyzed computer based coding scheme; constructed deductively and inductively

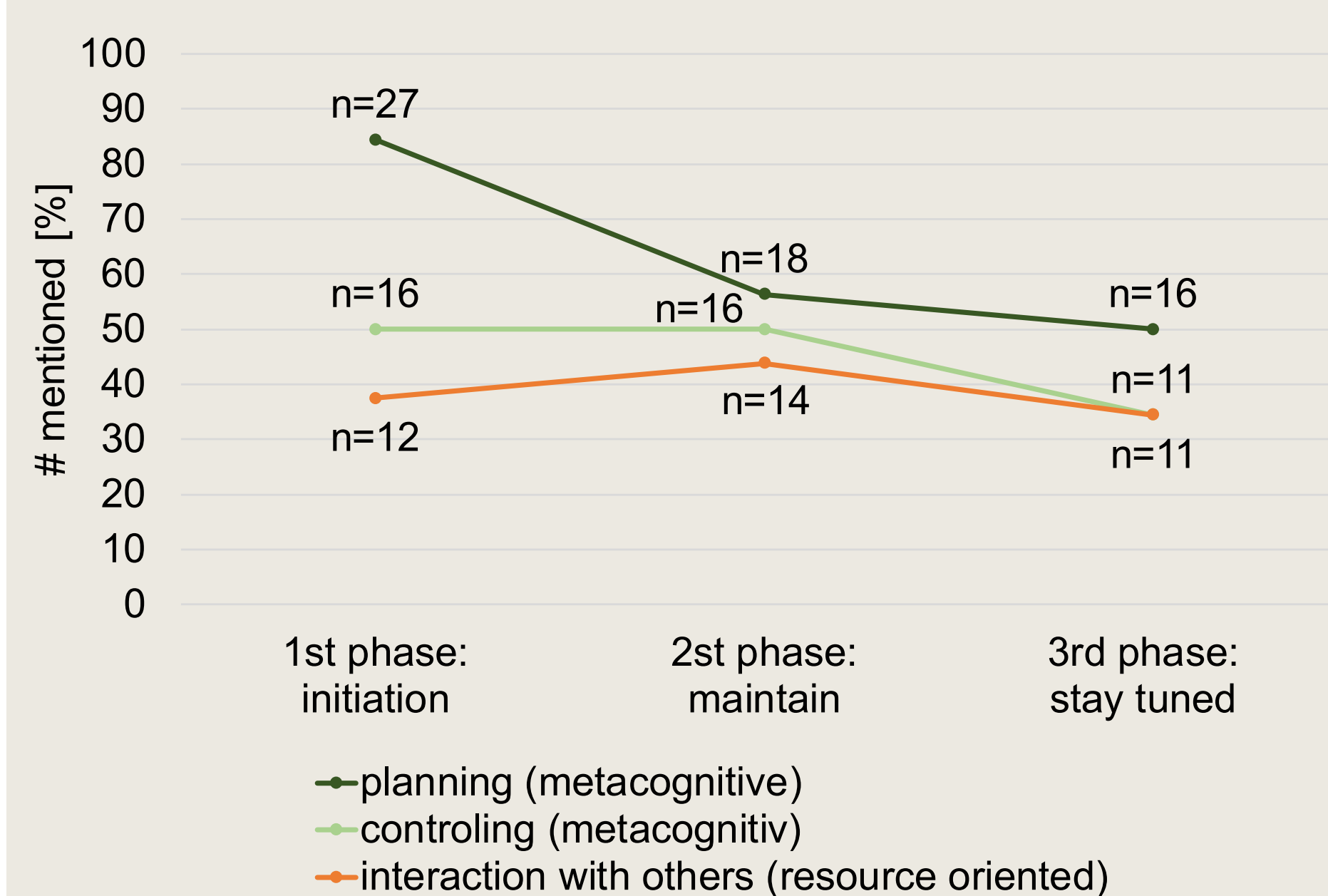
category subcategory	definition	example
1st phase: volitional strategies to initiate learning activities		
planning of the learning process	Strategies that are used to plan the learning process and substantiate the path to goal achievement.	"Exactly, so with the time management... So as I said, I try to plan more or less. I am thinking about how to plan Sundays or Saturdays...How does my week look like. And what must be done necessarily" [VOIO13, p. 2]
2nd phase: volitional strategies to maintain learning		
structuring the learning material	Strategies that are used to work with the learning material in such a way that the learning process can be continued	"To summarize topics and... further summaries, that aim at making me being active rather than just reading" [CJOA31, p. 2]
3rd phase: volitional strategies to stay tuned even when difficulties arise		
reward management	Strategies that are used to continue the learning phase with prospect of a reward	"I'll pick out events after the learning phases where I say: okay... then I'll look for my friends to join me. Where I say, cool let's do that, so I can look forward to" [CJIR16, S. 9]

RESULTS

volitional strategies



most used volitional strategies



DISCUSSION

It seems as if metacognitive strategies can easily be adopted to fit the need of volitional strategies.

Cognitive strategies are less likely to be used as volitional strategies, as they are used traditionally to cope with the material itself.

The most used strategies to be used as volitional strategies are planning and controlling.

Interesting in the context of distance learning is also, that interaction with others seem to be an important factor for volition.

References

- Achtziger, A. & Gollwitzer, P. M. (2010). Motivation and volition in the course of action. In J. Heckhausen & H. Heckhausen (Eds.), Motivation and action (2nd ed., pp. 272–295). Cambridge University Press.
- Corno, L. (1993). The Best-Laid Plans: Modern Conceptions of Volition and Educational Research. Educational Researcher, 22(2), 14–22.
- Schmitz, B., & Wiese, B. S. (2006). New perspectives for the evaluation of training sessions in self-regulated learning: Time-series analyses of diary data. Contemporary Educational Psychology, 31(1), 64–96.
- Weinstein, C. E., & Mayer, R. E. (1986). The teaching of learning strategies. In M. Wittrock (Hrsg.), Handbook of research on teaching (pp. 315–327). New York: Macmillan.

Contact

M.A. Rebecca Pientka
Ulm University
Institut of Psychology and Education / Learning and Instruction
Albert-Einstein-Allee 47, 89081 Ulm
rebecca.pientka@uni-ulm.de