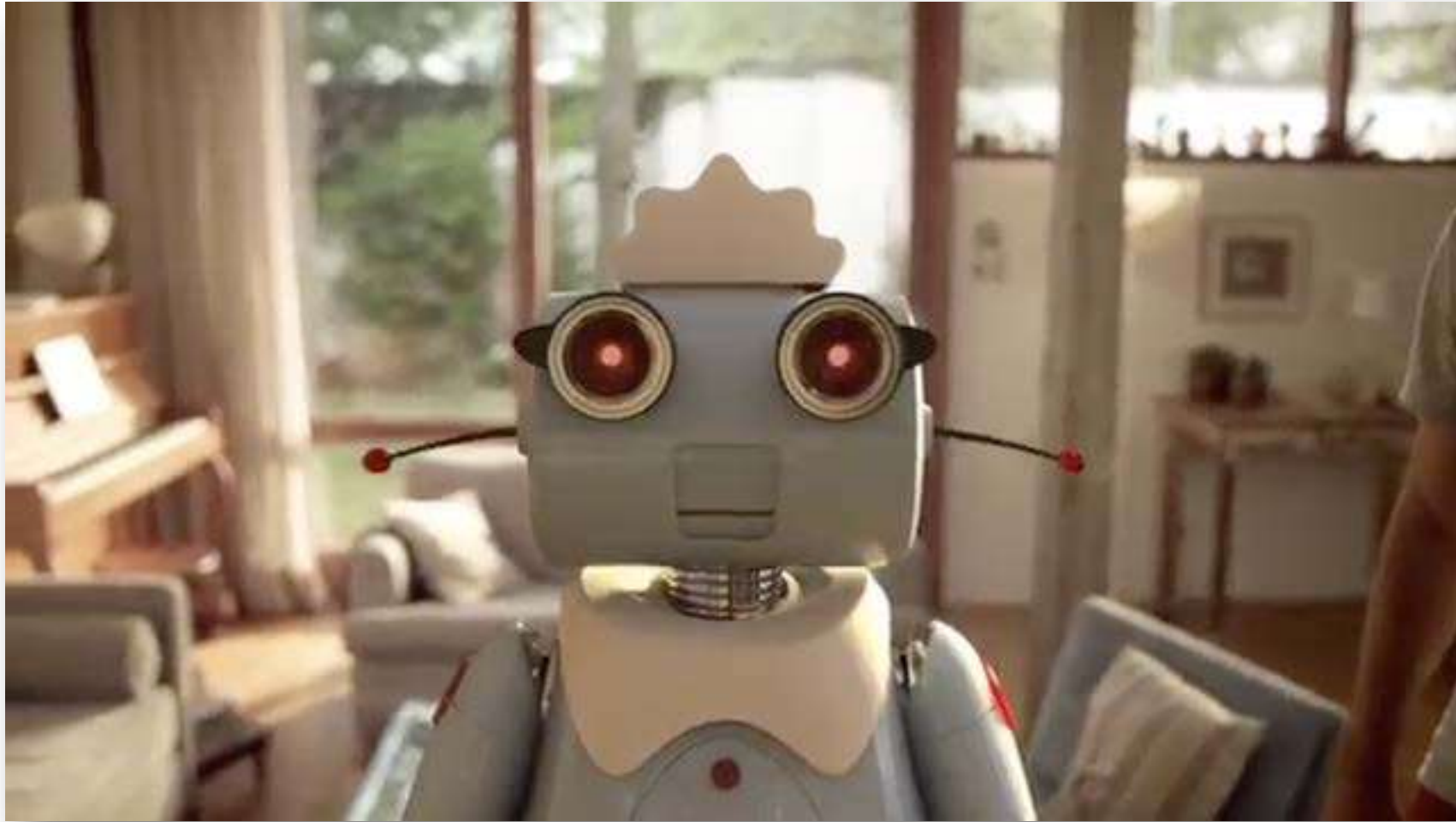


# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



Animesh Garg



UNIVERSITY OF  
TORONTO



VECTOR  
INSTITUTE



**nVIDIA**

# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



Vacuumping



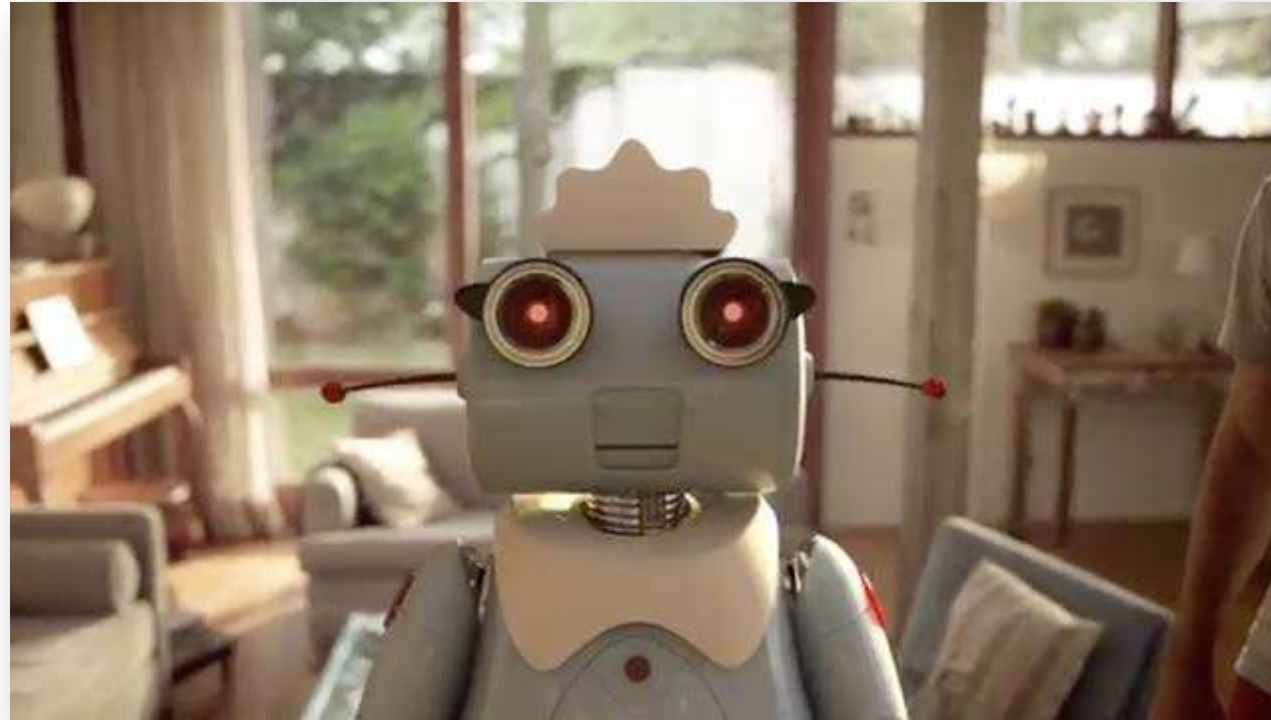
Sweeping/Mopping



Cooking



Laundry



# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



Vacuuming



Sweeping/Mopping



Cooking



Laundry

Diversity:  
New Scenes,  
Tools,...



Complexity:  
Long-term  
Settings

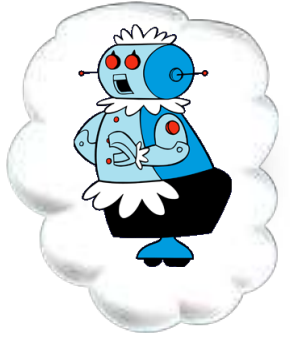


# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation

**Vision:** Build Intelligent Robotic Companions  
towards Human Enrichment and Augmentation



# Generalizable **Autonomy** in Robot Manipulation

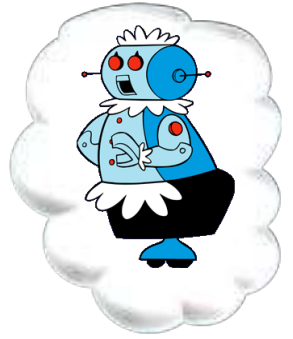


## 1956 Dartmouth AI Project



1956

# Generalizable *Autonomy* in Robot *Manipulation*

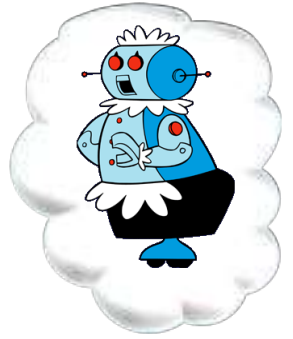


Dartmouth AI Meeting

UNIMATE  
1st Industrial robot

1956 '61 1968

# Generalizable *Autonomy* in Robot *Manipulation*



Dartmouth AI Me

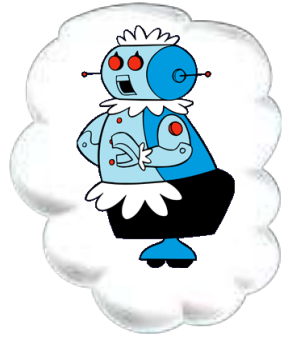
UNIN  
1st Indus

ATLAS CAN WALK IN  
**TOUGH** CONDITIONS,

1956 '61 1968

2013

# Generalizable *Autonomy* in Robot *Manipulation*



Dartmouth AI Meet

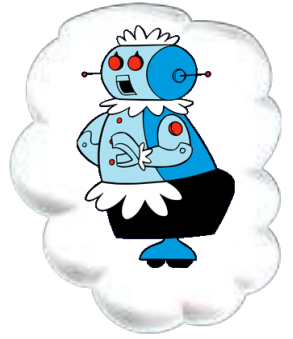
UNIMA  
1st Industrial

P

1956 '61 1968

2013 2018

# Generalizable *Autonomy* in Robot *Manipulation*



Unstructured/Unknown  
New Environment



Dartmouth AI Me

UNIM  
1st Indus

1956 '61 1968

2013 2018 2019

# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation

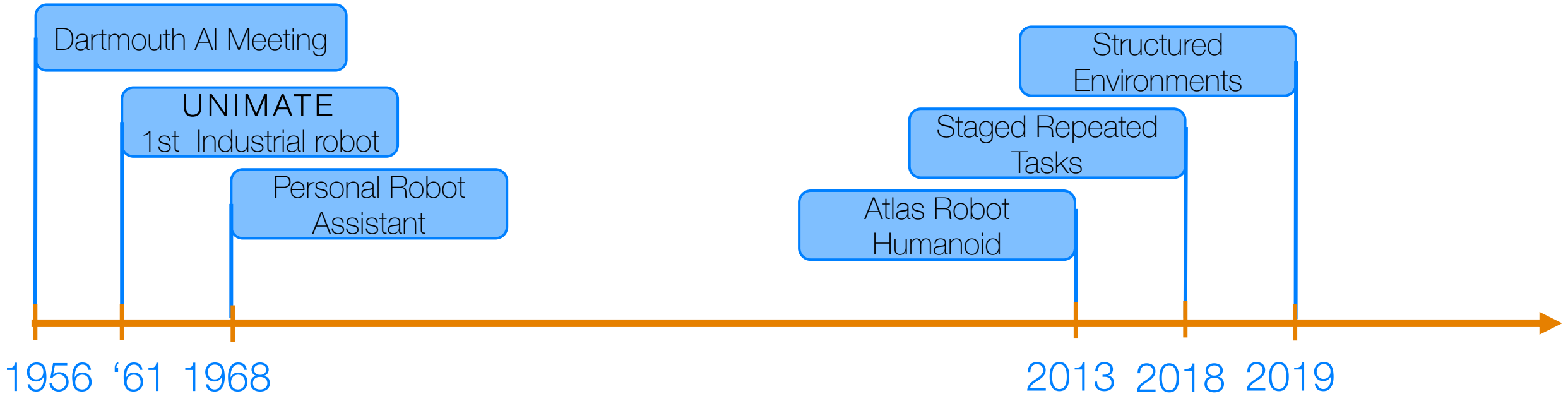
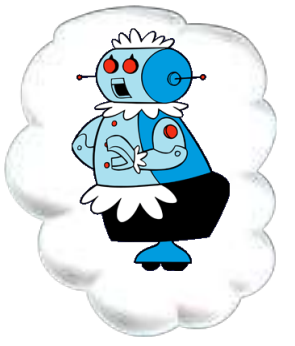


Then



Now

How to Generalize to Unstructured Scenarios?



# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation

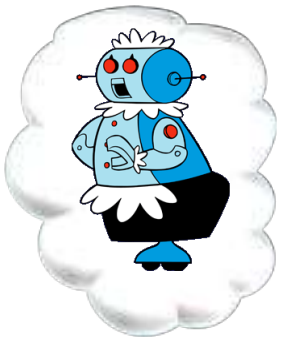


Then

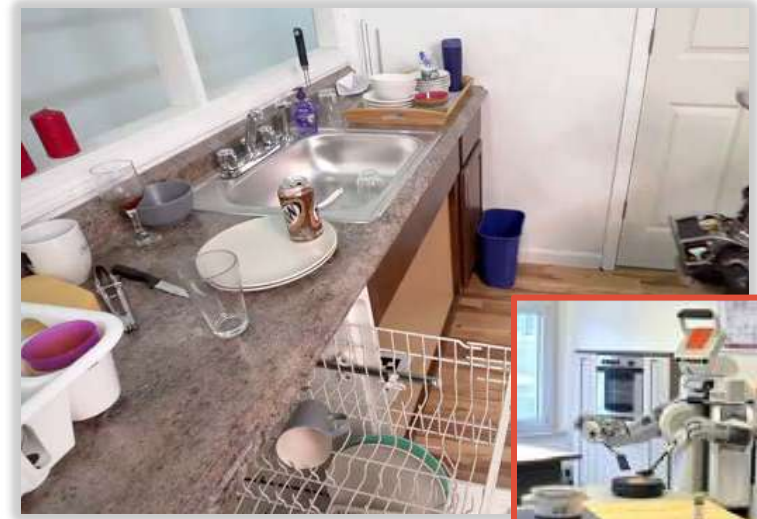


Now

How to Generalize to Unstructured Scenarios?



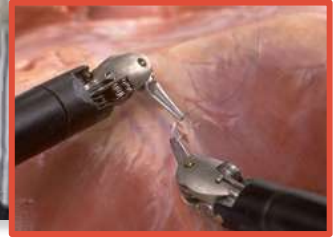
Manufacturing/Retail



Personal/Service



Healthcare/Medicine

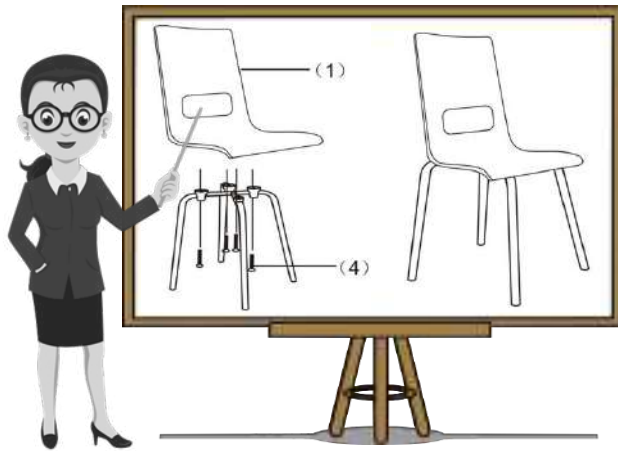


# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation

**Vision:** Build Intelligent Robotic Companions

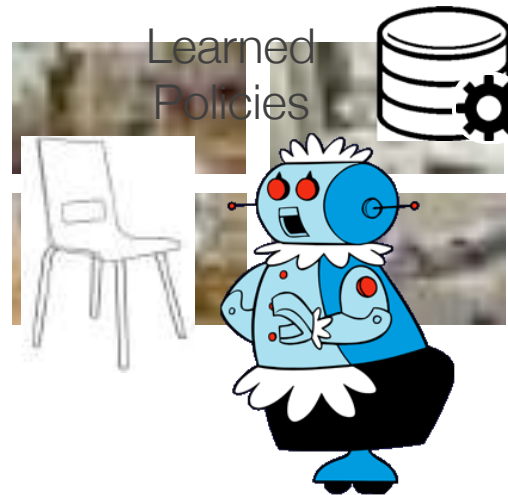
**Approach:** Learning with Structured Inductive Bias and Priors

Demonstration



Instructional Input  
(Teleoperation, Video, Language)

Task Imitation



Learn to do the task in  
Same Environment

Generalization



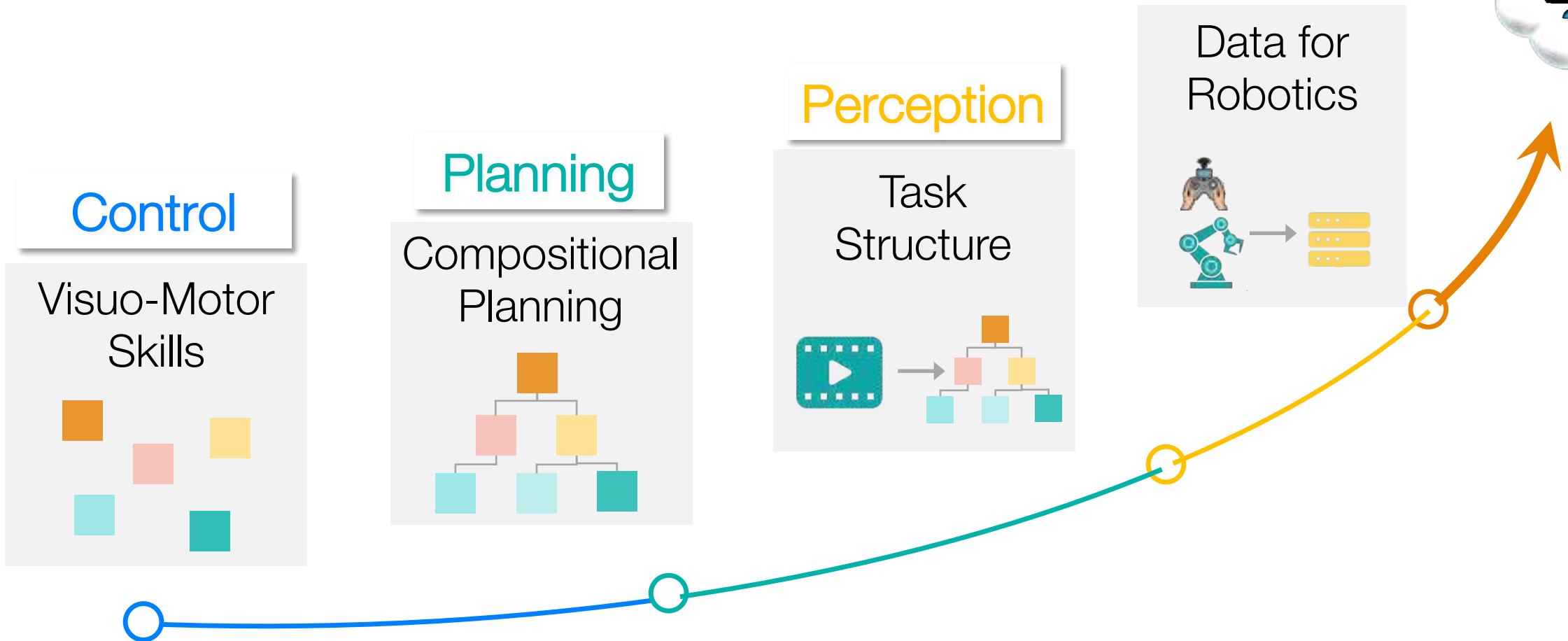
New Task Variations  
in Novel Environments

# Layers of Imitation

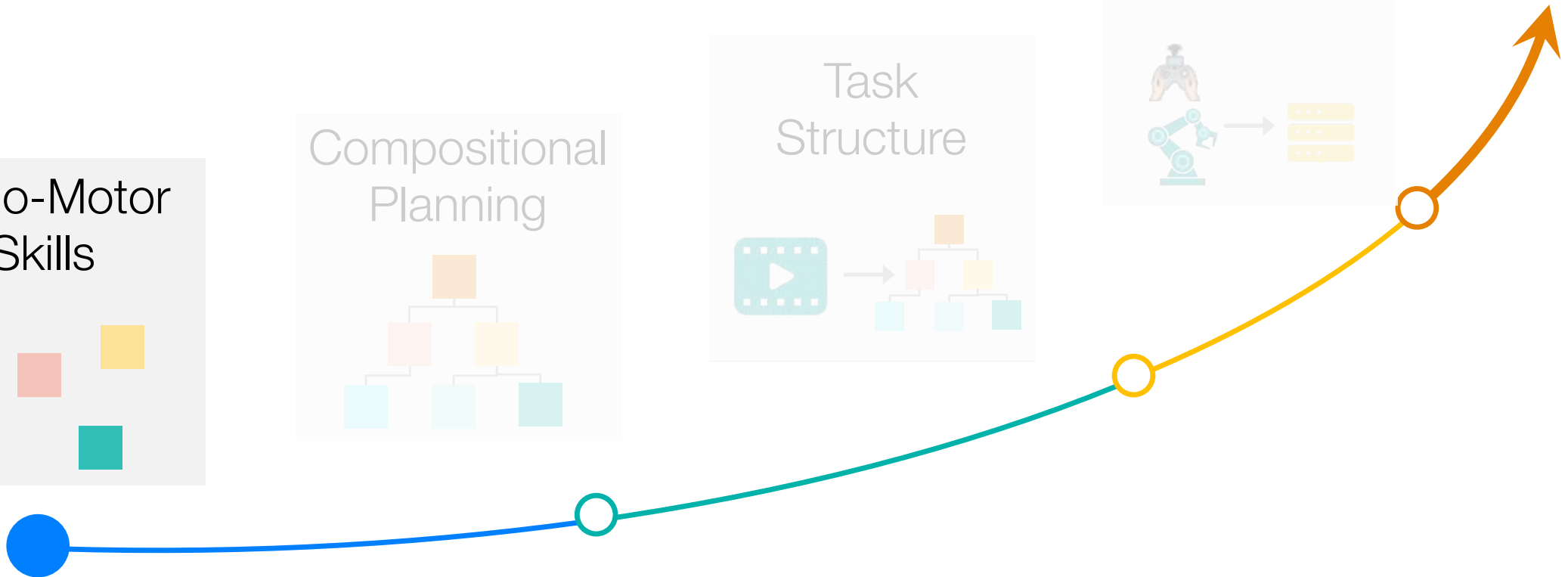
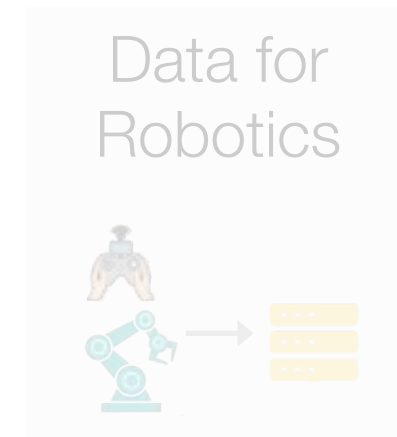
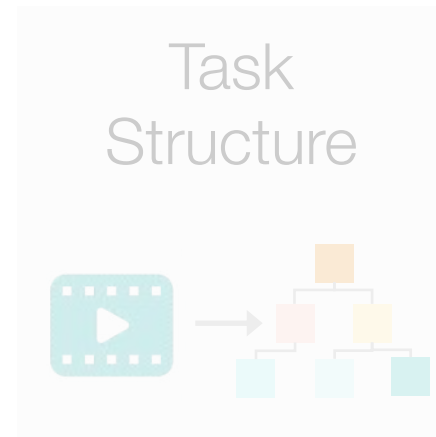
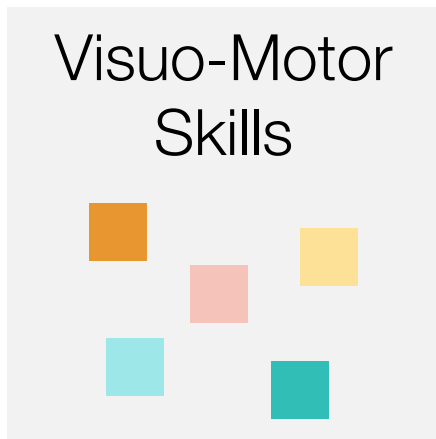


Task Specification

# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



# Visuo-Motor Skills

**Challenge:** Algorithmic frameworks to learn a **diversity** of skills

**Approach:** Close the **Visuo-Motor** Loop with Learning based **Control**



Vacuuming



Sweeping/Mopping



Cooking



Cleaning

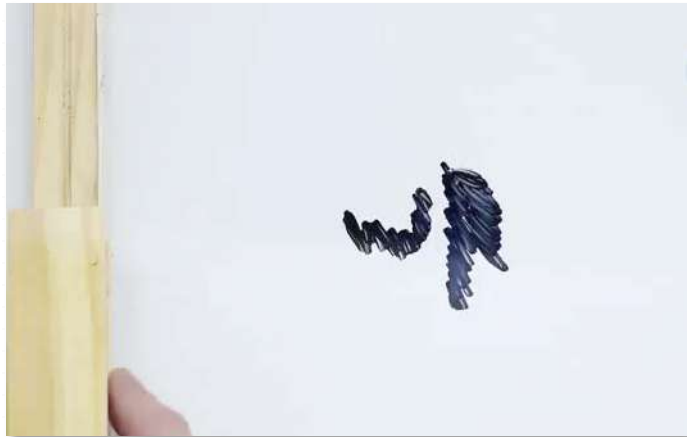
# Visuo-Motor Skills: Generalization



Cleaning



Hard Stains – Push Harder?



Skills: Surface Wiping



Different Surfaces – Be Gentle?

Generalization

# Visuo-Motor Skills: Current Paradigm

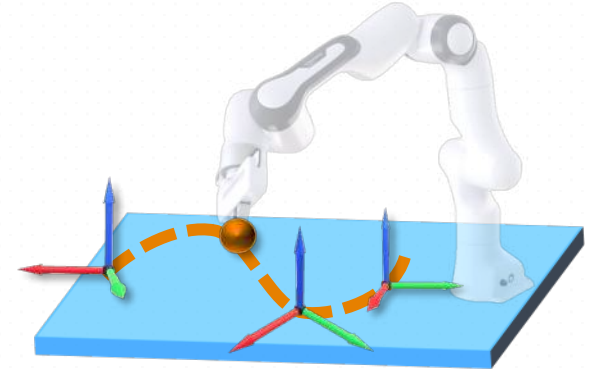
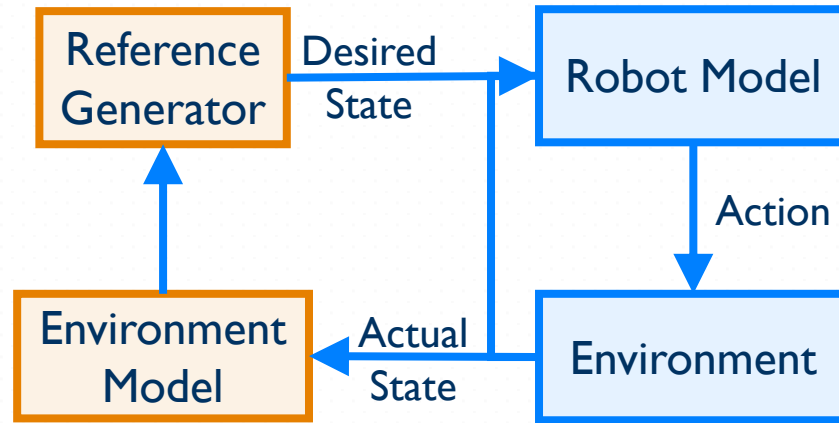
## Model Based Task (Operational) Space Control

Actual State: Image, Force, Joint Enc.

Desired State:  $x_d$

Robot Model Parameters:  $M, J$

Action:  $\tau$



### Robot Model

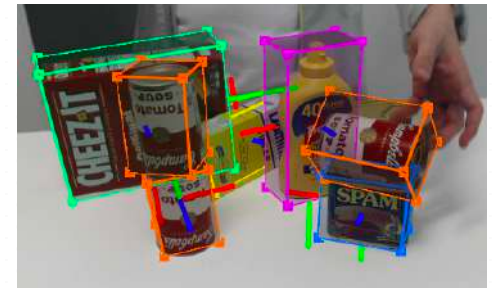
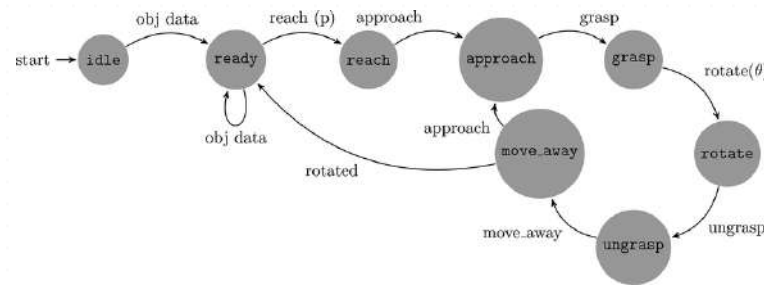
$$\ddot{x}_{ref} = K_p(x_d - x) + K_v(\dot{x}_d - \dot{x}) + \ddot{x}_d$$

$$M(q, \dot{q}) + C(q, \dot{q}) + G(q) + \varepsilon(q, \dot{q}) = \tau$$

$$\tau = J^T (JM^{-1}J^T)^{-1}(\ddot{x}_{ref} - \dot{J}\dot{q} + JM^{-1}F)$$

- + Leverages Robot Model
- + Compliant Control

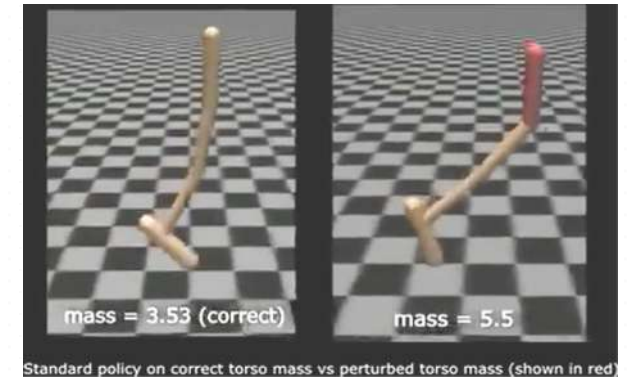
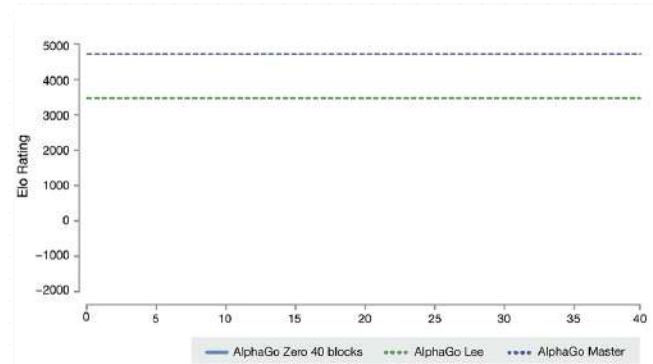
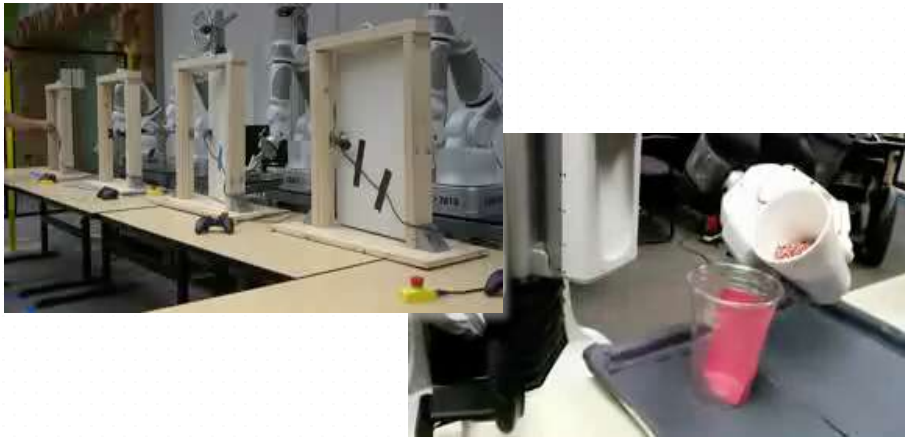
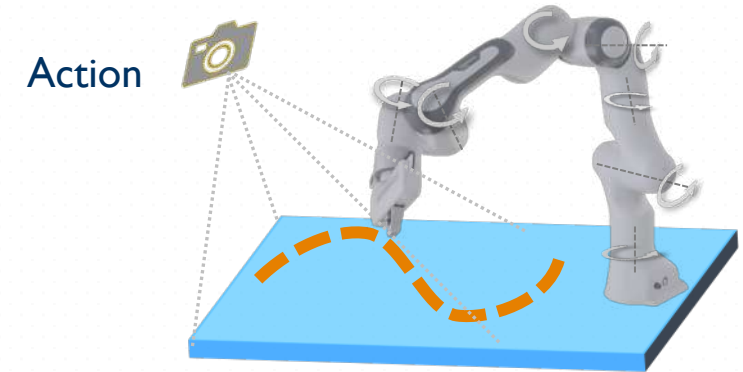
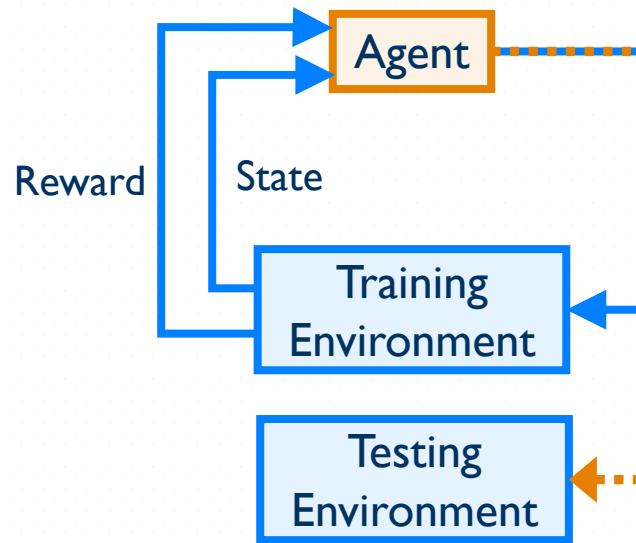
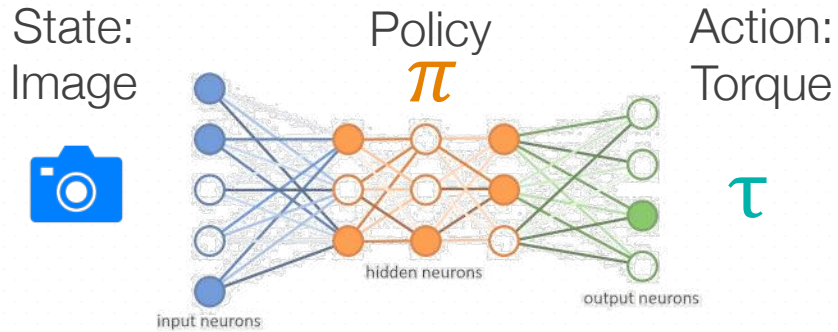
### Environment Model + Reference Generator



- Needs Environment (Task) Model
- Task Dependent State
- Explicit State Estimation

# Visuo-Motor Skills: Current Paradigm

## Deep Reinforcement Learning



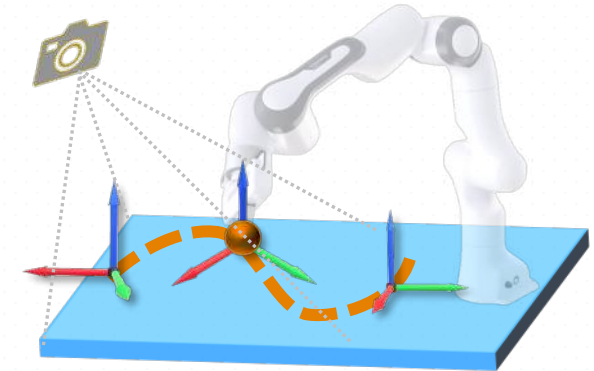
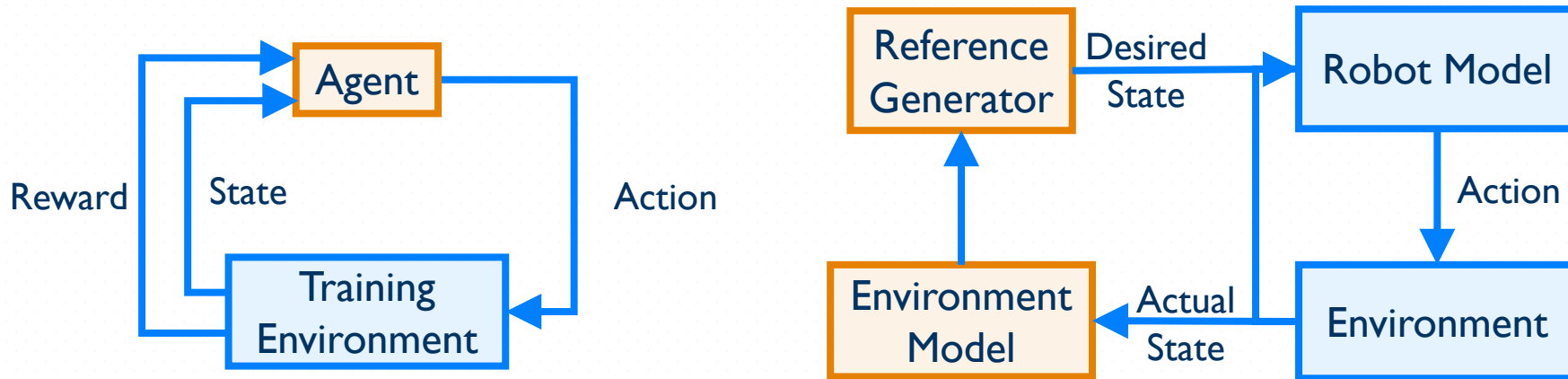
- + Model Free: No Environment Model
- + State is Image

- Sample Inefficient
- Learn robot model (implicitly)

- If Training  $\neq$  Testing: Policy Fails!

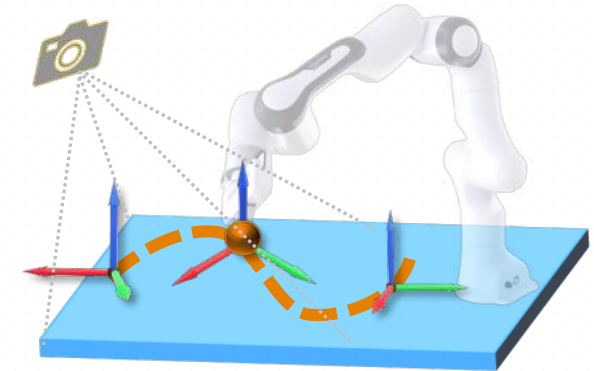
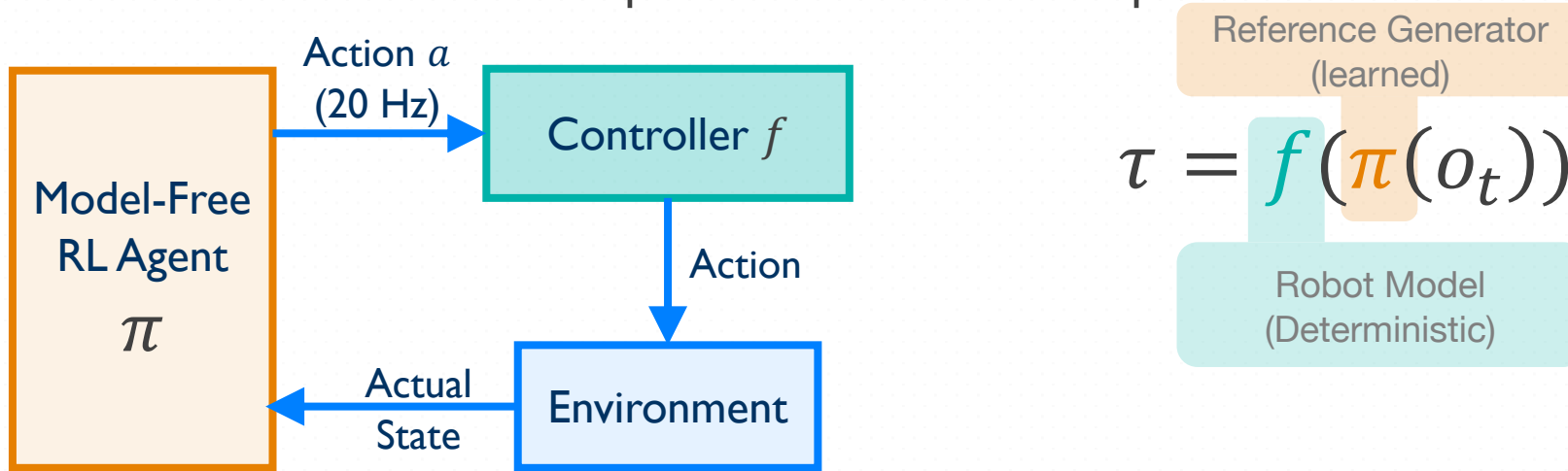
# Visuo-Motor Skills: Our Approach

RL with Variable Impedance Task-Space



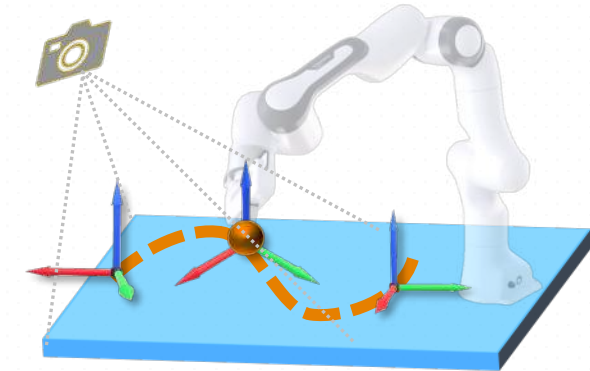
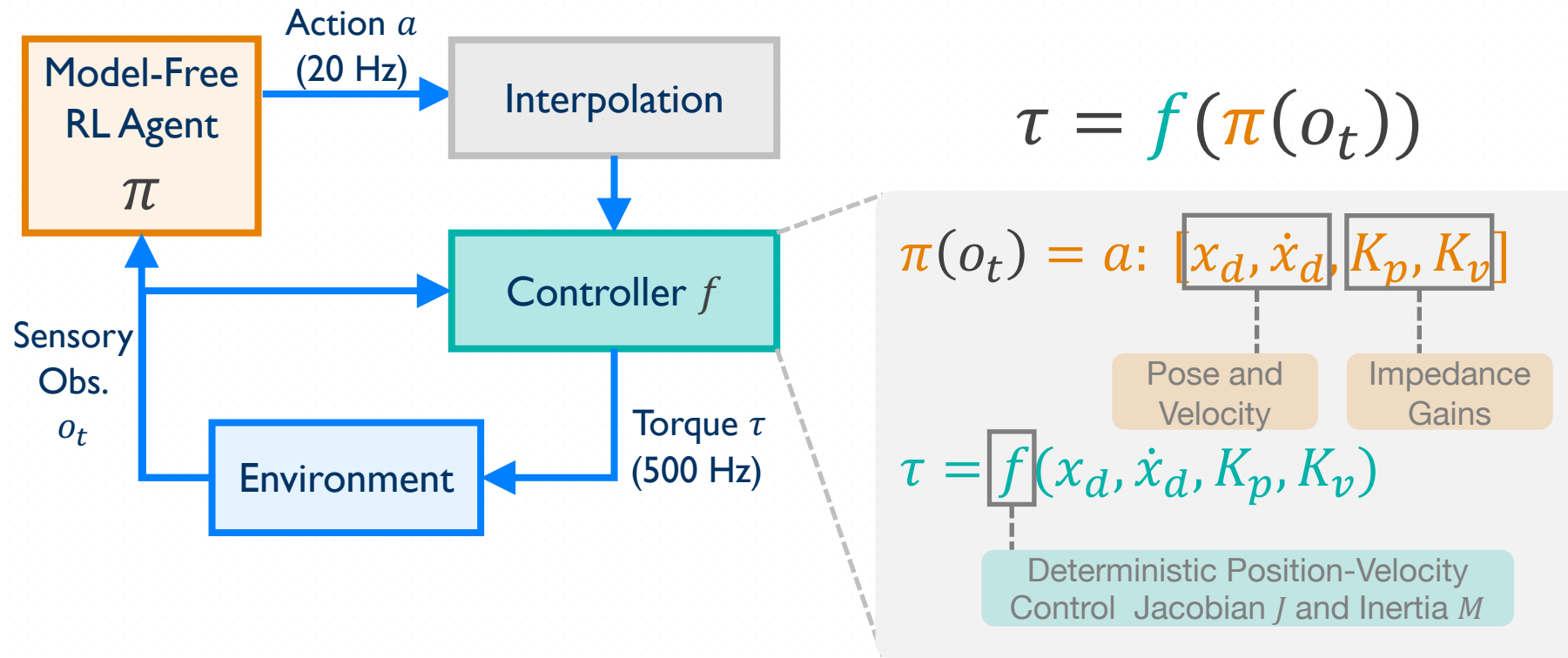
# Visuo-Motor Skills: Our Approach

RL with Variable Impedance Task-Space



# Visuo-Motor Skills: Our Approach

## RL with Variable Impedance Task-Space



- + Model Free: No Environment Model
- + State is Image

- + Leverages Robot Model
- + Compliant Control

- + Sample Efficient
- + Transferable

# Visuo-Motor Skills: Action Representation

Surface Wiping

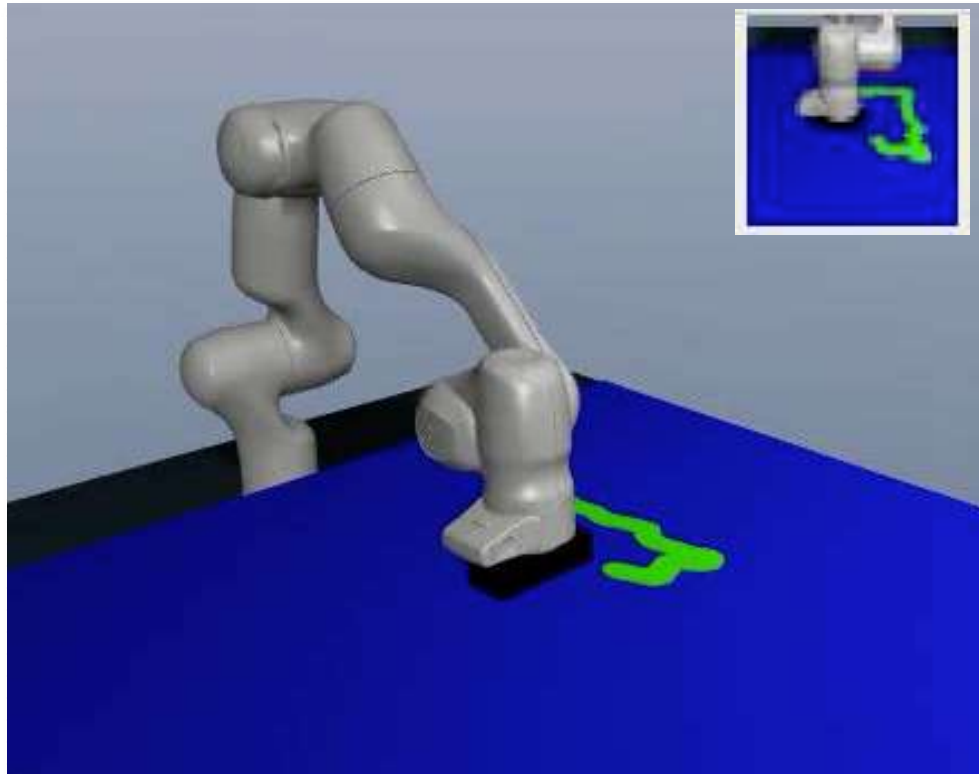
Input: Image (48x48)

Minimize the number of Dirty Tiles

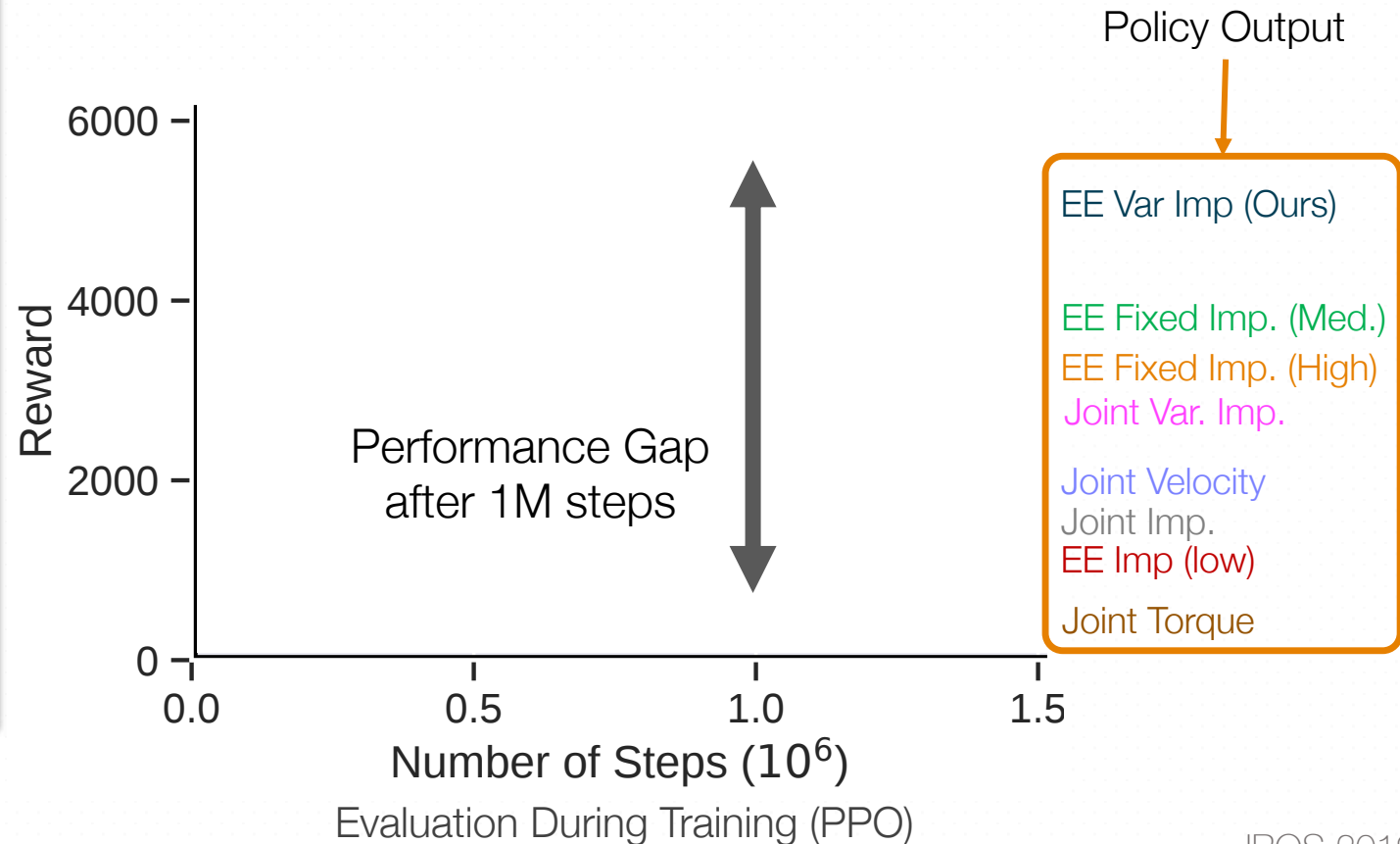
Maintain Contact with the Table

Don't push with more than Robot Payload

$$\text{Reward: } \lambda_1 \sum(\text{dirt\_on\_table}) + \lambda_2(\text{distance\_to\_table}) - \lambda_3 \mathbb{I}(F \geq 40N)$$



Trained Policy Rollout (Ours)



# Visuo-Motor Skills: Action Representation



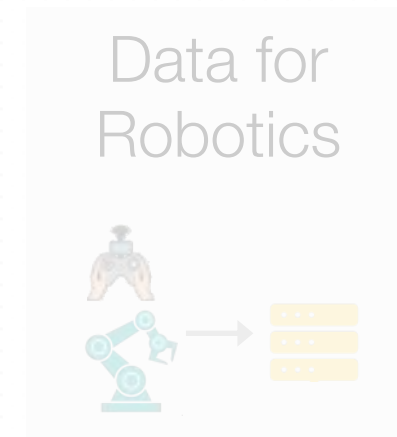
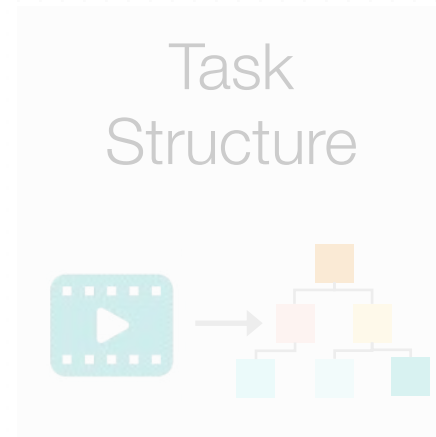
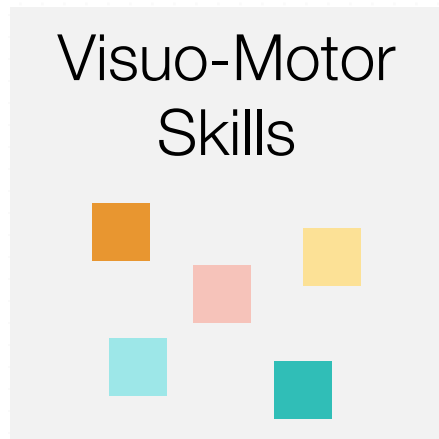
$$\tau = f_{sim}(\pi(o_t))$$



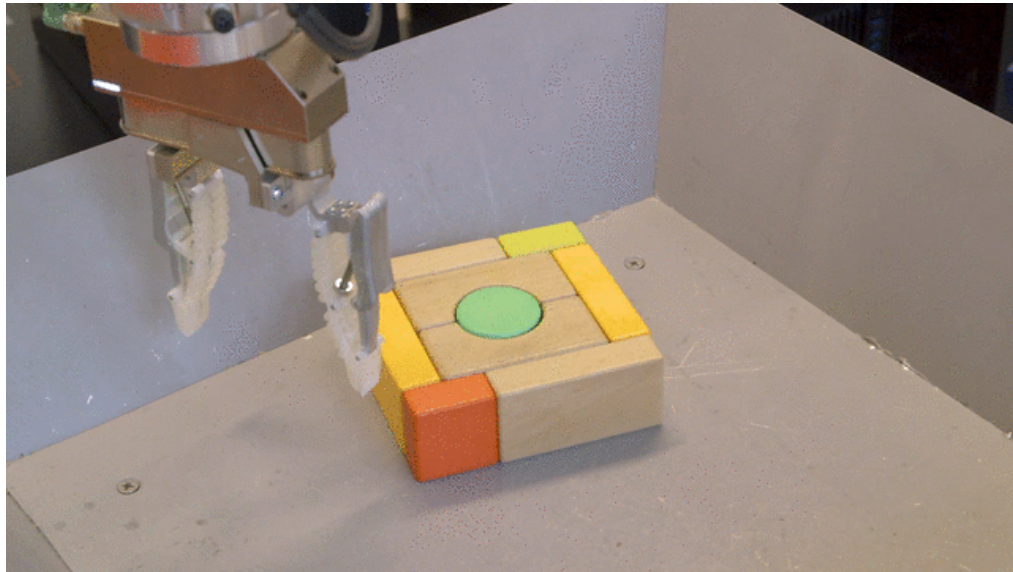
$$\tau = f_{Real}(\pi(o_t))$$

Success 80% (10 Trials)

# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



# Skills: Imitation from Heuristics



Promise of Deep RL  
closed loop-control with images



...albeit, with a lot of training

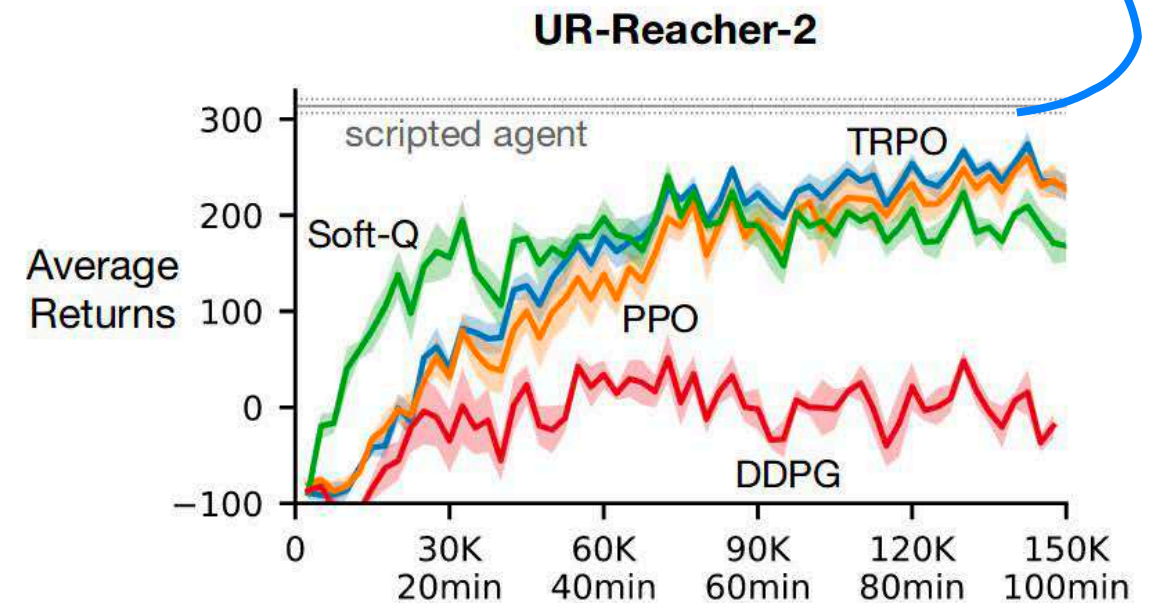
[Kalashnikov et al (2018). Levine et al. (2016), Pinto et al. (2016), Kalashnikov et al. (2018), Yu et al. (2016), Haarnoja et al. (2018), Lee et al. (2019), Vecerik et al. (2017)]

# Skills: Heuristics often beat RL

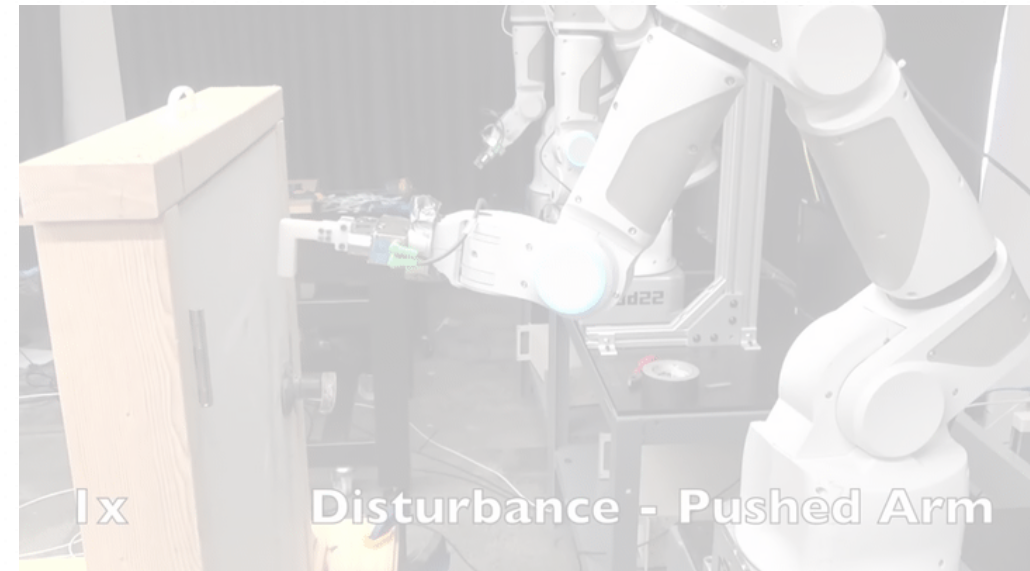
RL struggles with structured, multi-step skills



Even simple heuristics beat RL



# Skills: Exploration without Guidance



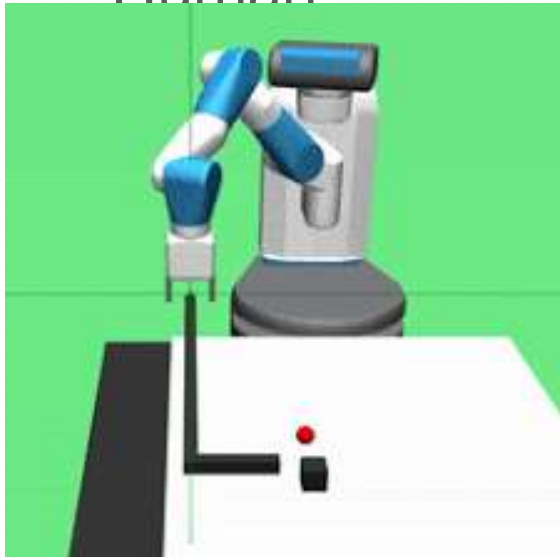
Random Exploration is slow

...even when first steps are obvious

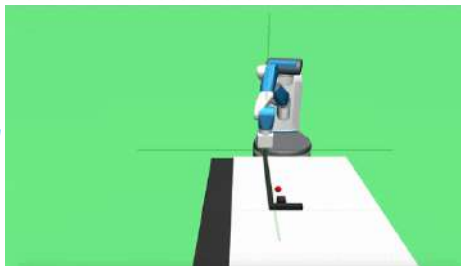
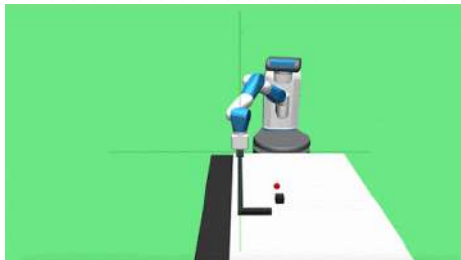
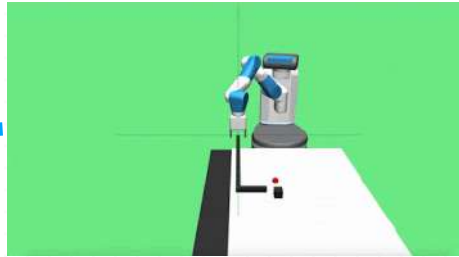
Can Human Intuition Guide Exploration?

# Skills: Imitation from Heuristics

Human Task



Teachers



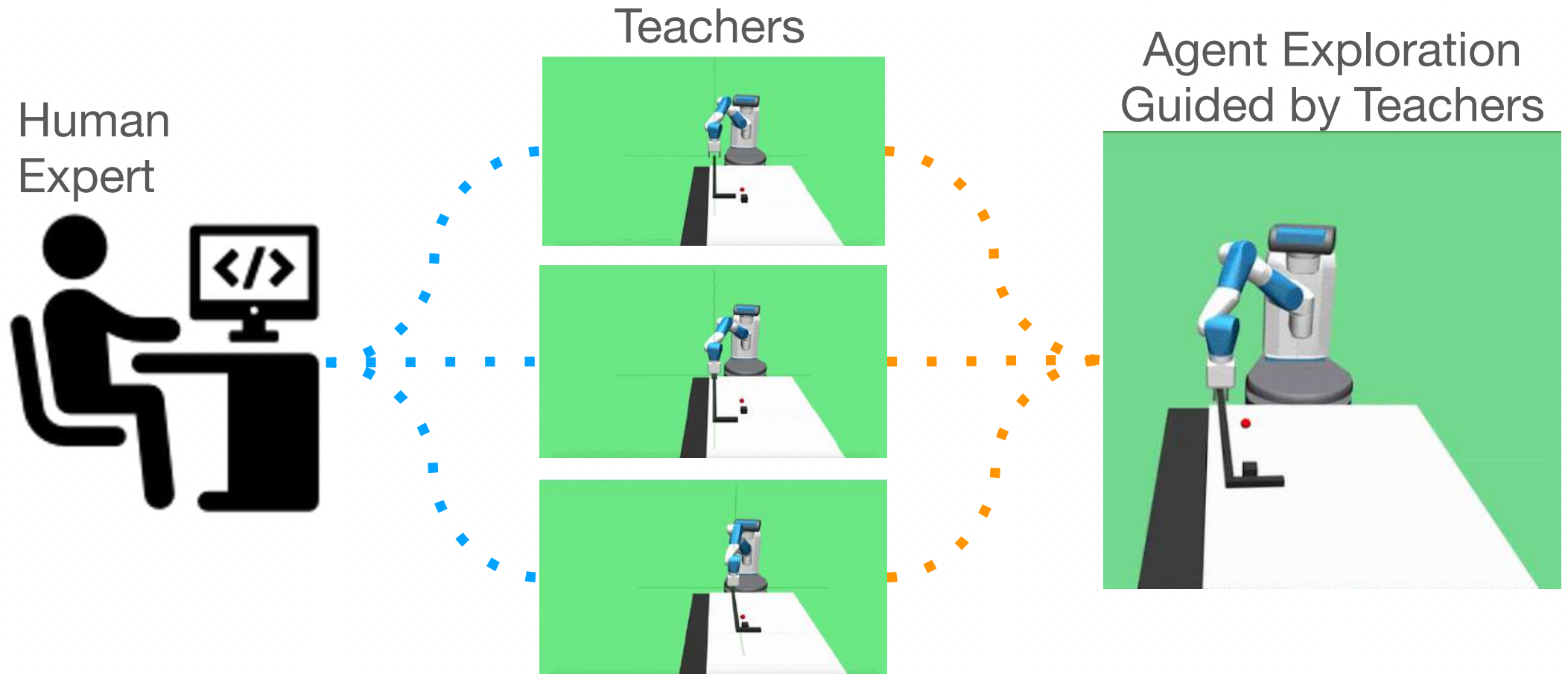
Intuition

Implement Useful Skills  
...but not full solution

Teachers

Black-box controllers  
solving parts of the task

# Skills: Imitation from Heuristics

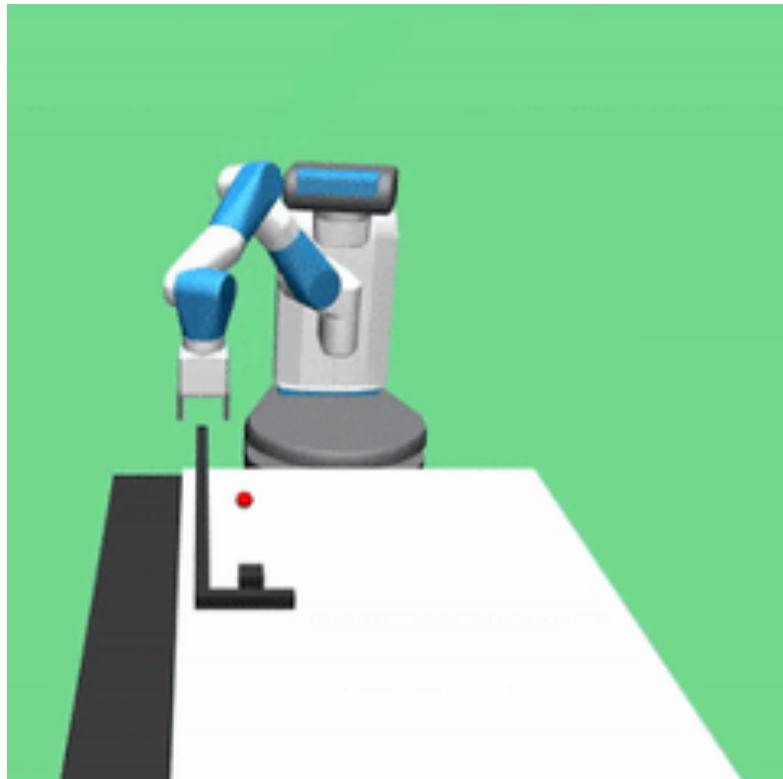


Goals: A) faster agent training B) optimal test-time agent performance

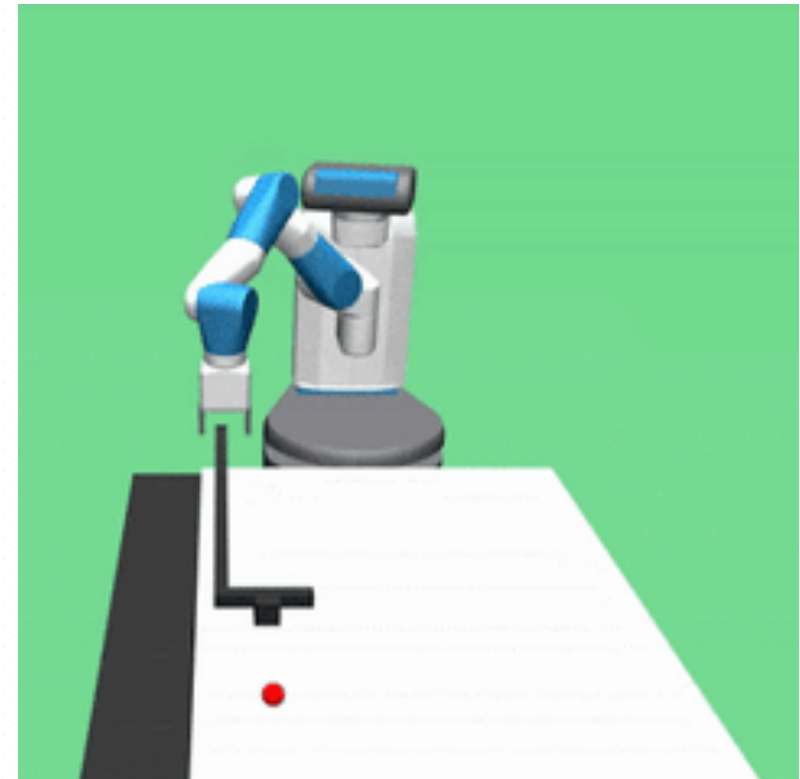
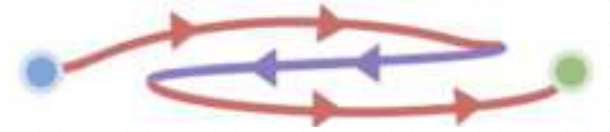
# Skills: Imitation from Heuristics

Naive action choice might not work well!

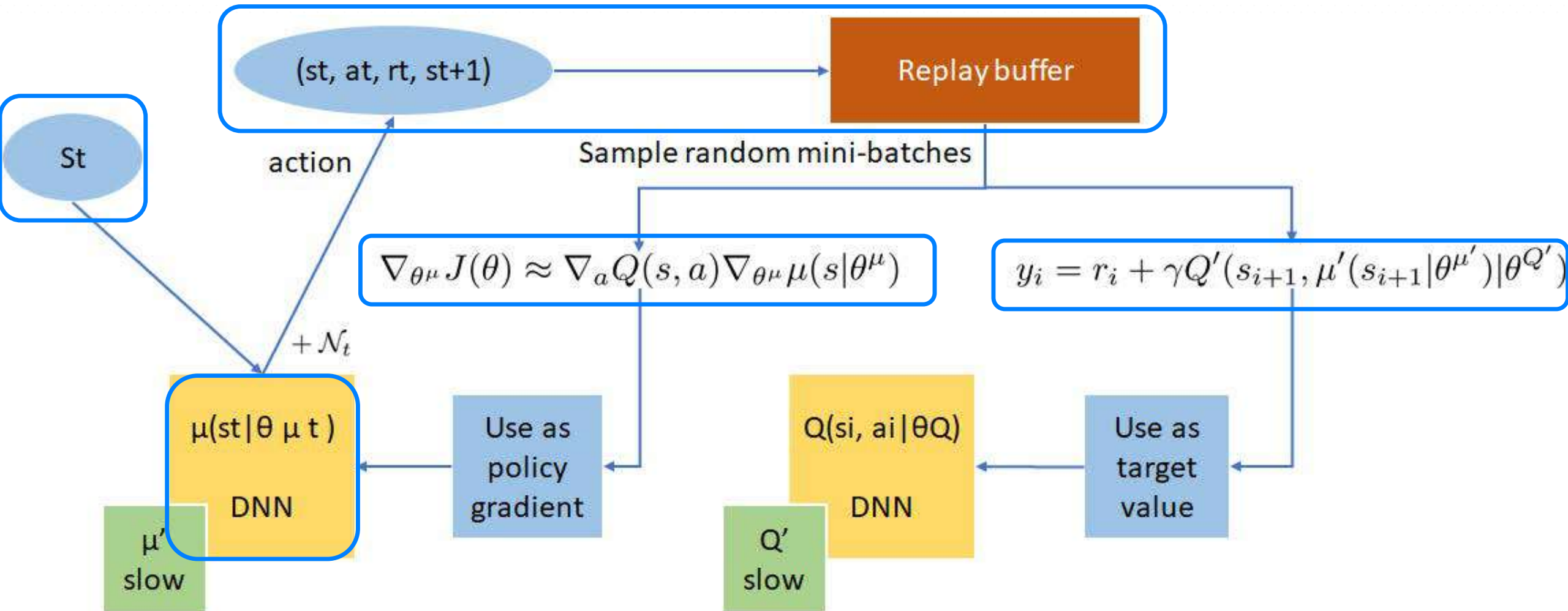
*Partial*



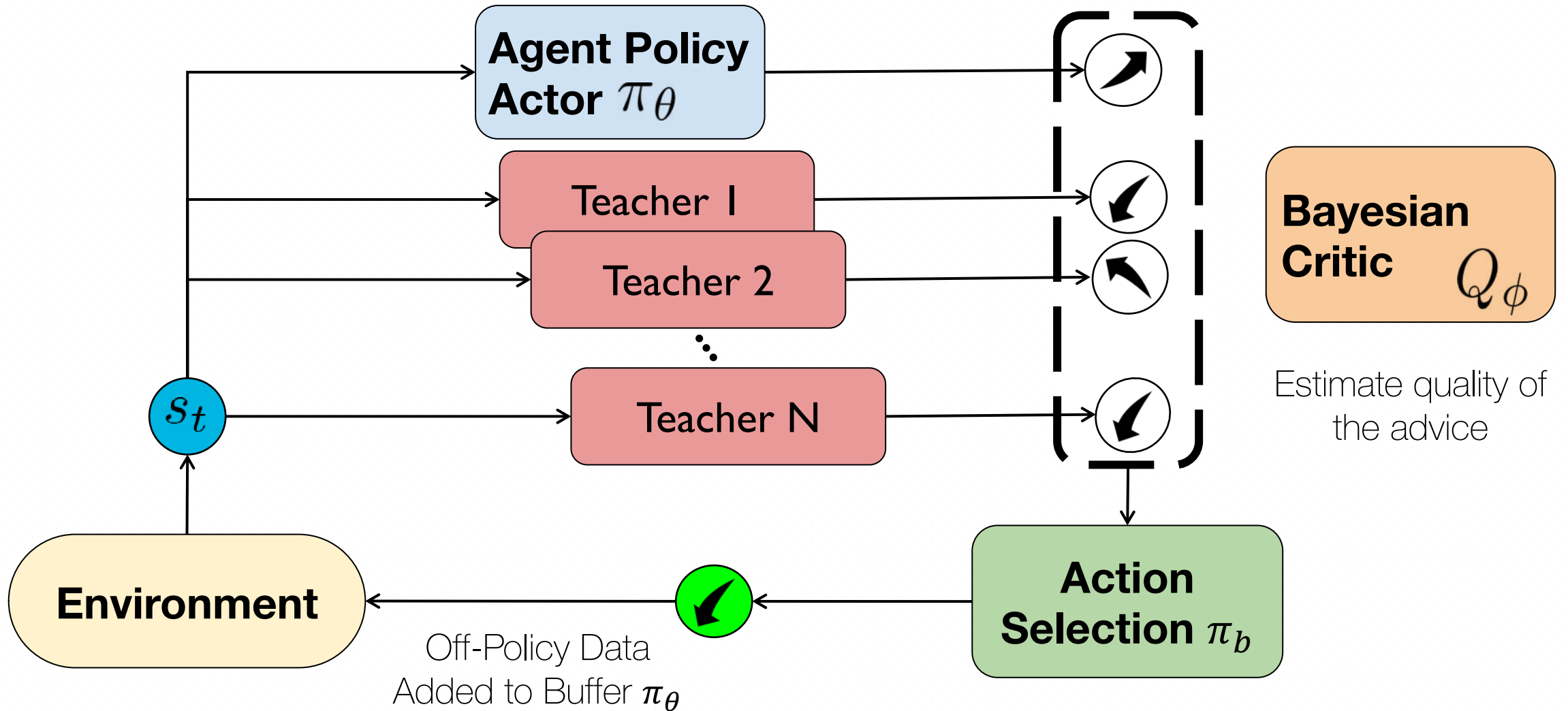
**Contradictory**



# Off-Policy RL: DDPG Review

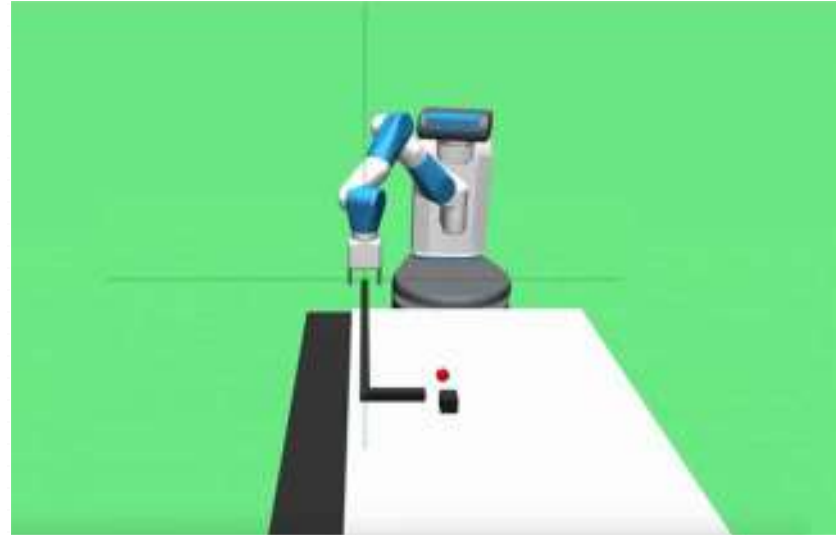


# AC-Teach: Actor-Critic with Teachers

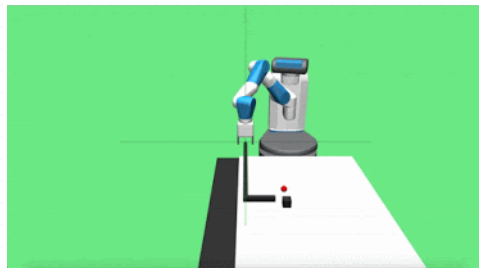


# Experiments

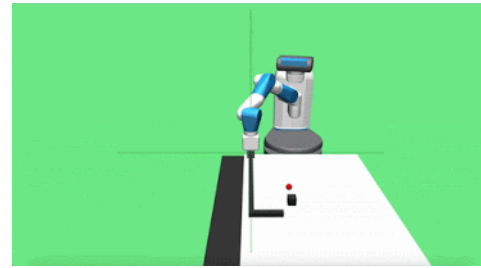
Task:



Teachers:



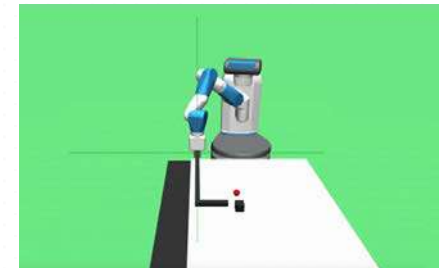
grab hook



position hook



pull



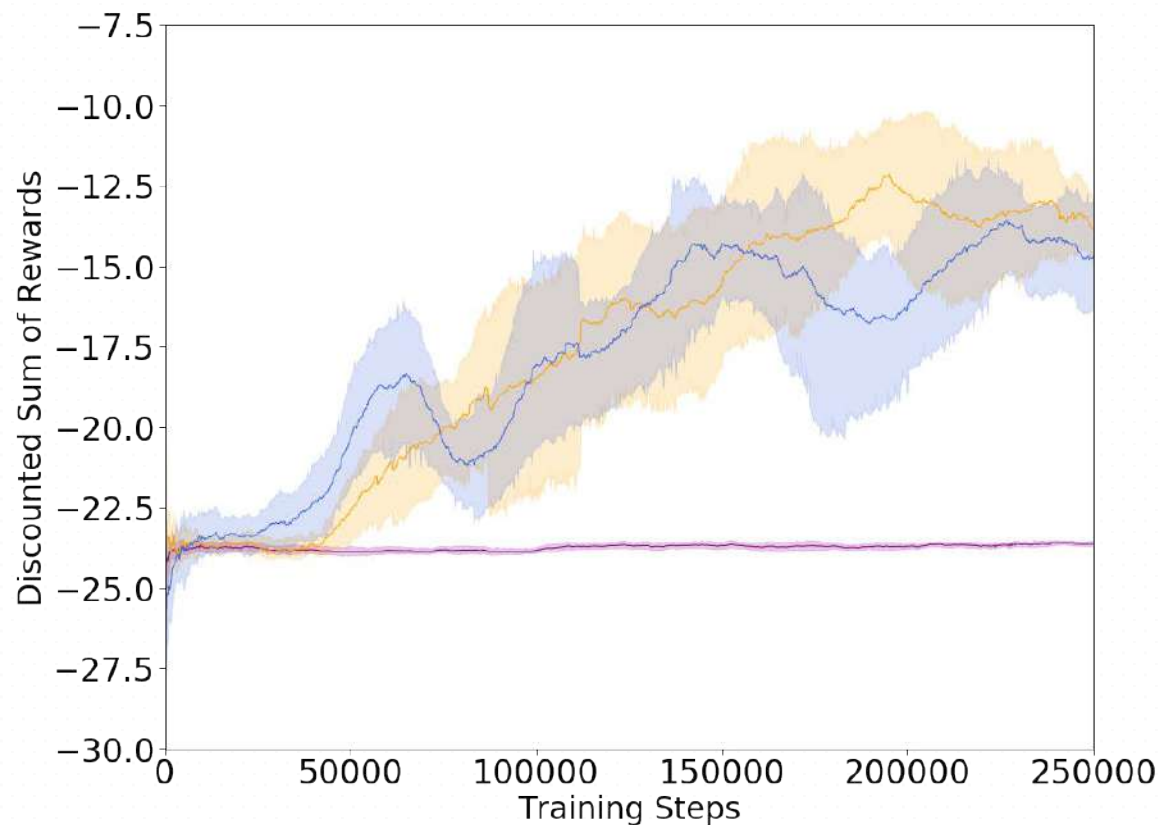
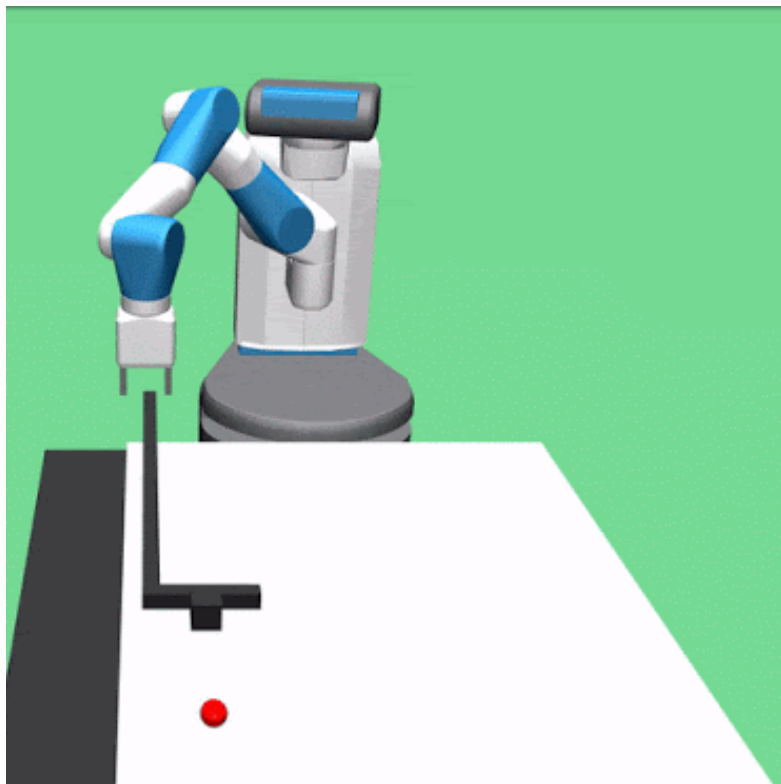
push

# Results

— B-DDPG + AC-Teach (ours)

— B-DDPG + DQN

— B-DDPG (no teachers)



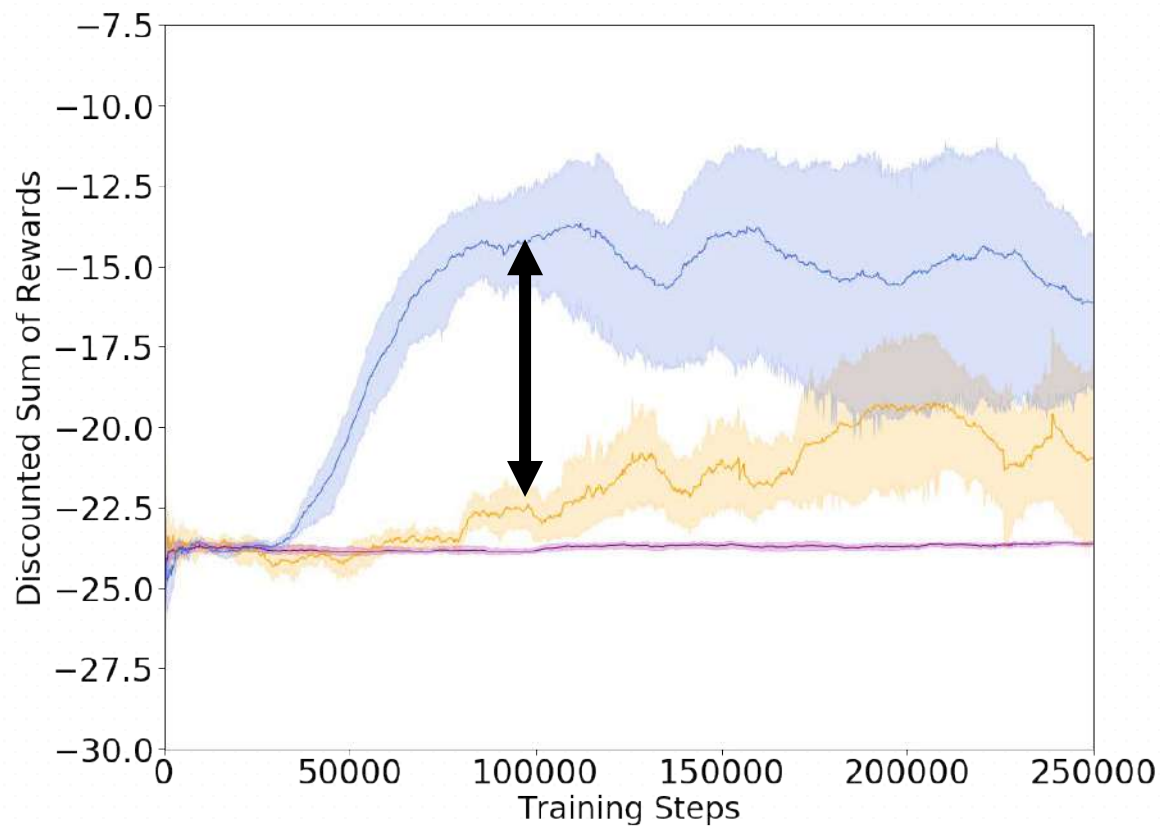
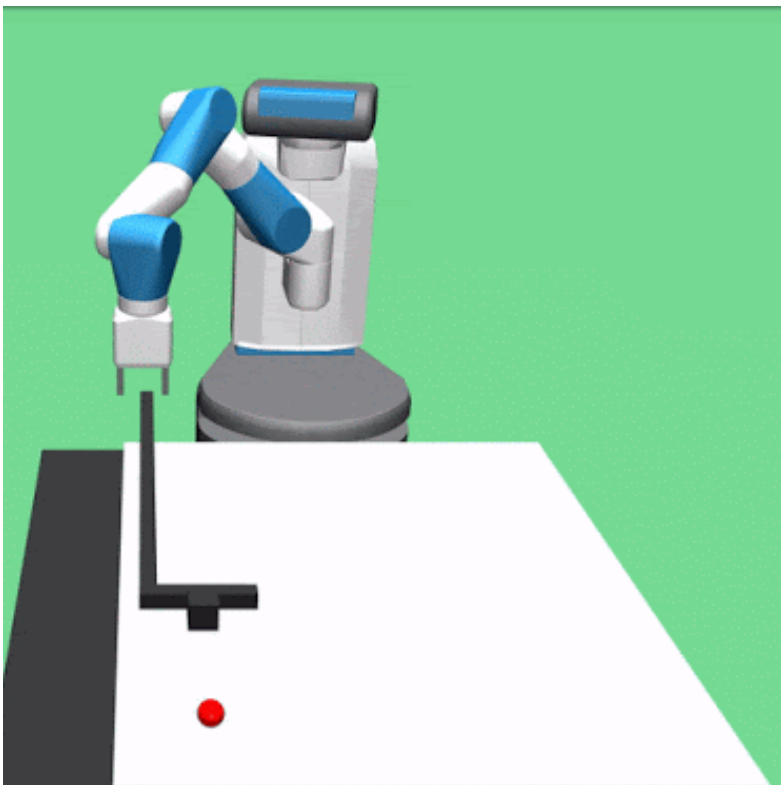
AC-Teach is able to leverage a single teacher well

# Results

— B-DDPG + AC-Teach (ours)

— B-DDPG + DQN

— B-DDPG (no teachers)



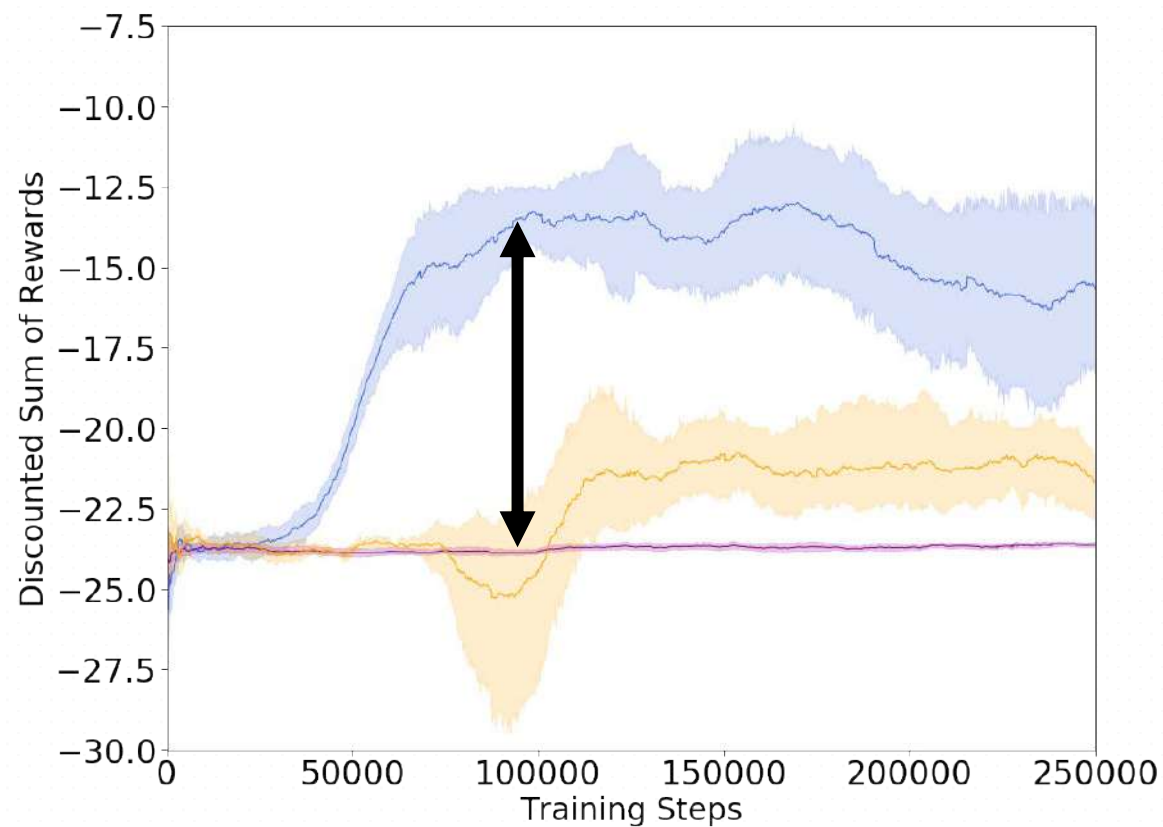
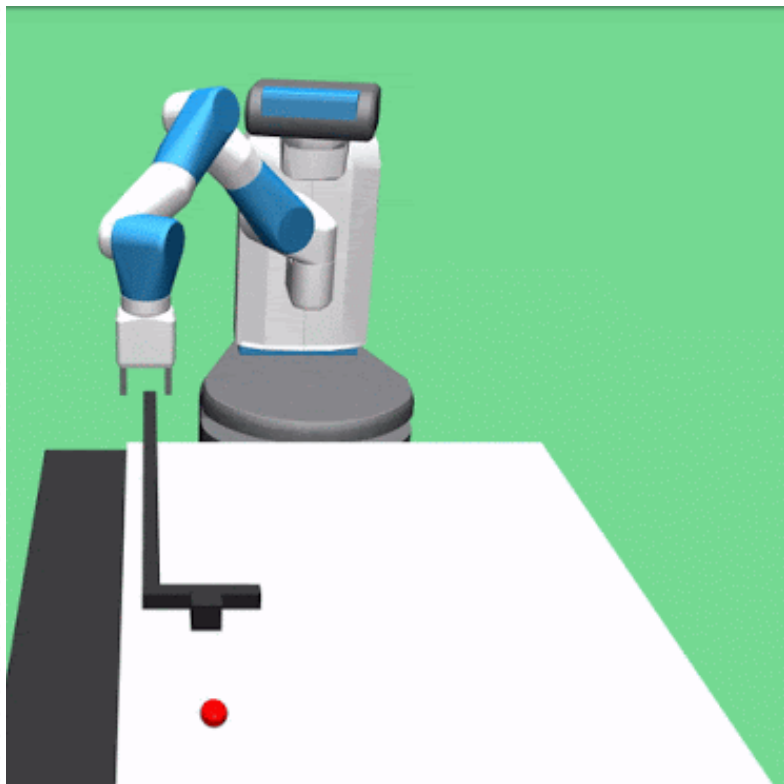
AC-Teach speeds up training given multiple teachers

# Results

— B-DDPG + AC-Teach (ours)

— B-DDPG + DQN

— B-DDPG (no teachers)



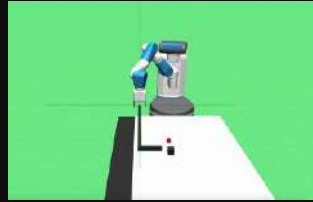
AC-Teach has agent learn behaviors not in teacher set

# Visuo-Motor Skills

- Grasping
- Pushing
- Picking
- Wiping
- Open door



IROS 2019

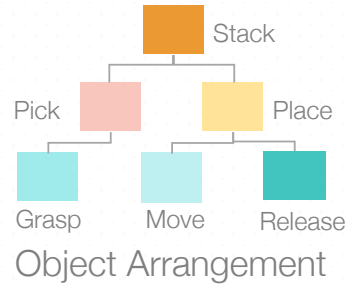


CoRL 2019



Action Representations and Weak-Supervision provide  
structure to enable learning efficiency and generalization

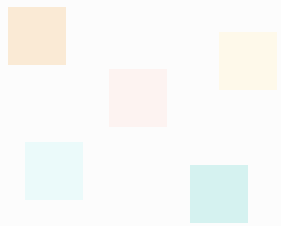
# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



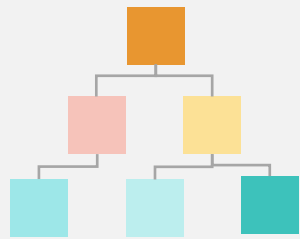
RSS 2018, IJRR 2019



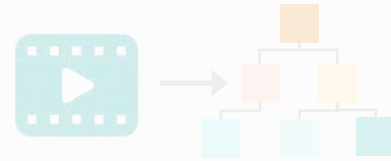
Visuo-Motor Skills



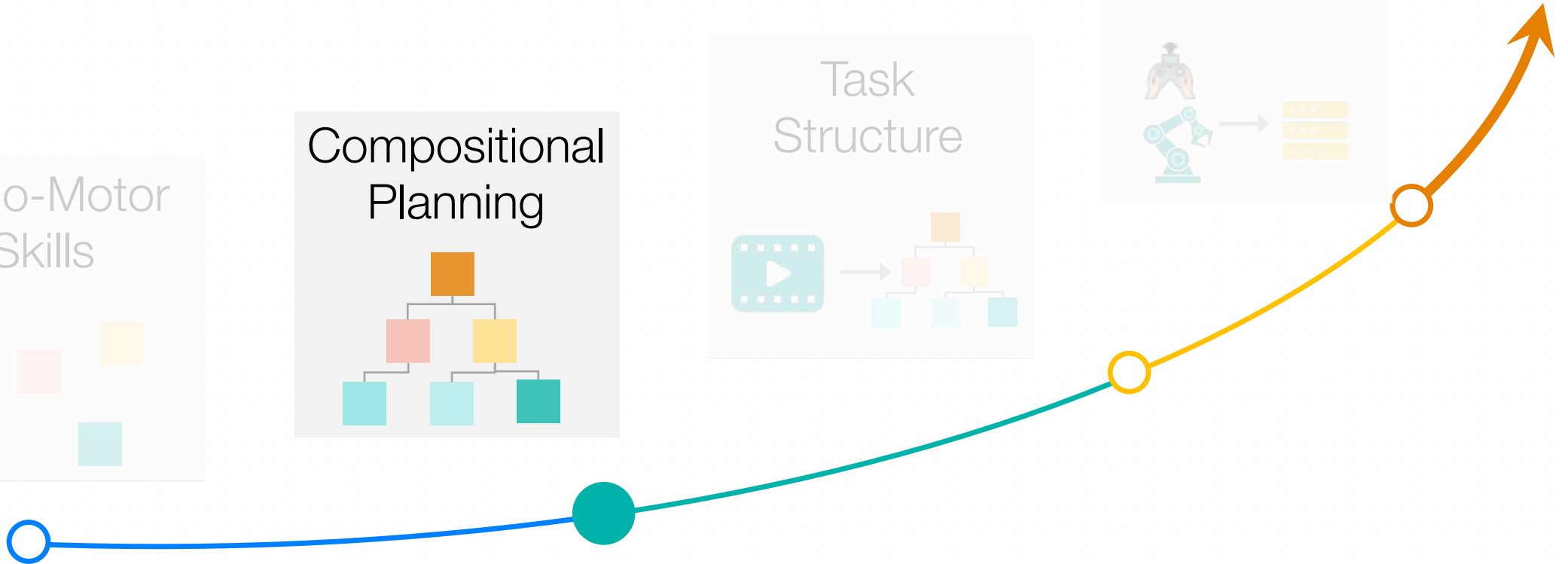
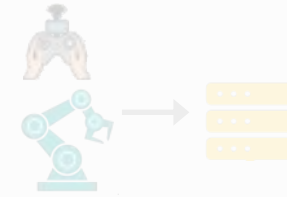
Compositional Planning



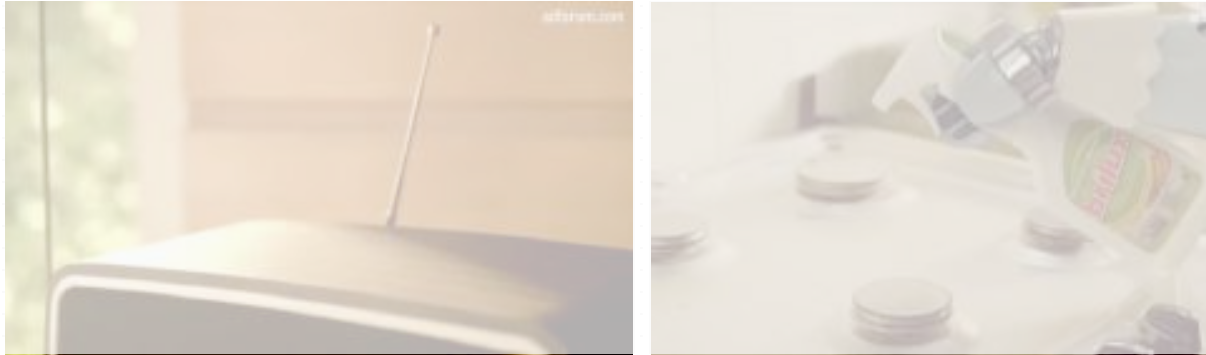
Task Structure



Data for Robotics



# Sequential Skills



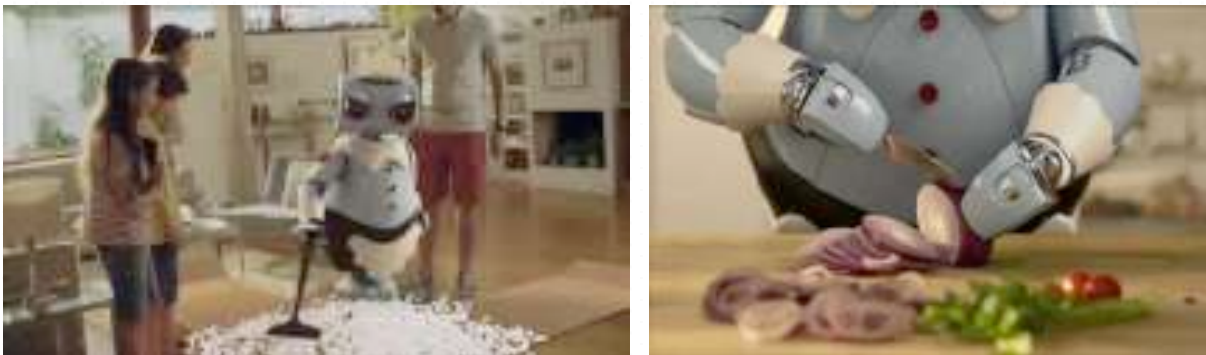
Skills: Surface Wiping

## Primitive Skills

- Grasping
- Pushing
- Picking
- Wiping
- Open door

## Sequential Skills

- Hammering (with unknown objects)
- Cutting (with new knife)
- Sweeping (with new broom)



Skills: Tool Use

# Sequential Skills: Manipulation with Tools

Task-Oriented Grasping

Tool-Use

Initial State



Unknown Object

Task-Agnostic Grasping<sup>1</sup>

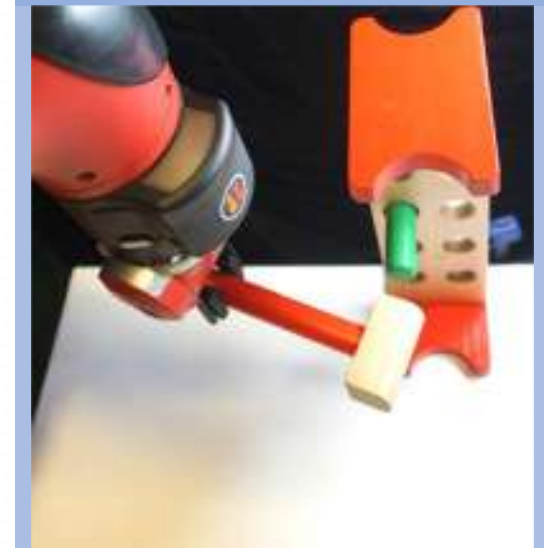
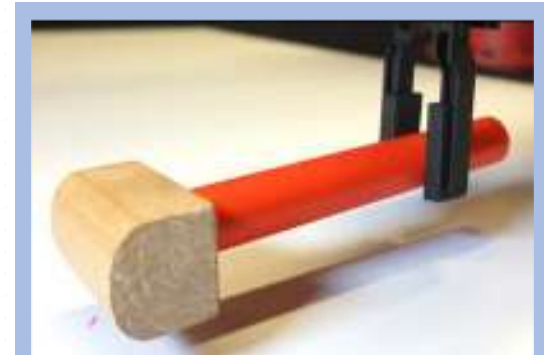


Optimizes for Grasp Success **Only**

**Suboptimal** for Task!



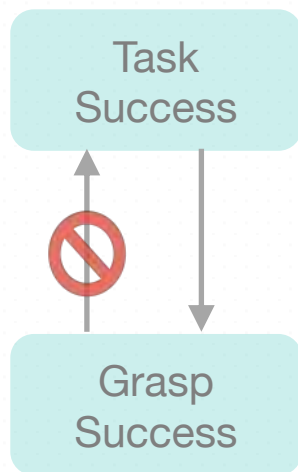
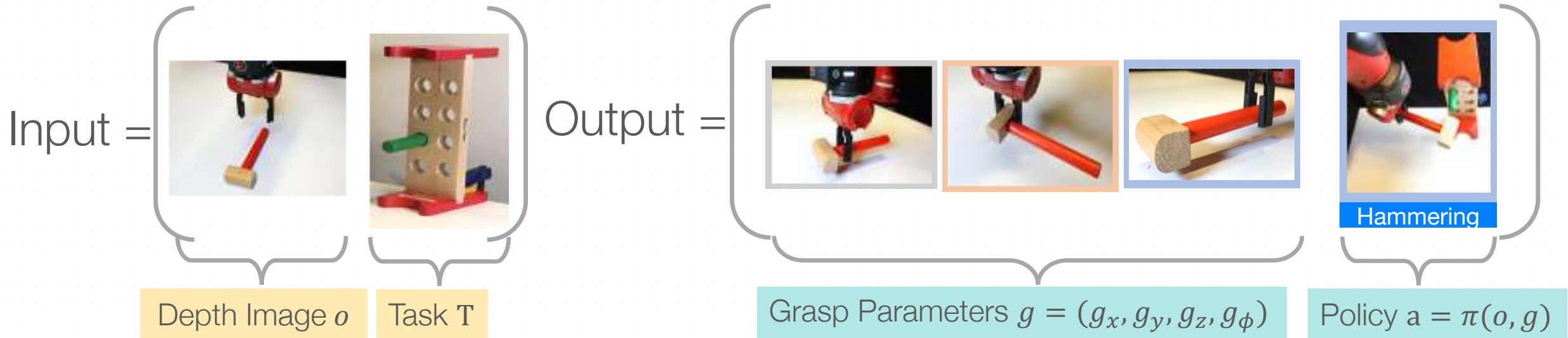
Sweeping



Hammering

<sup>1</sup> Pinto et al. '16, Levine et al. '16, Mahler et al. '18, Kalashnikov et al. '18

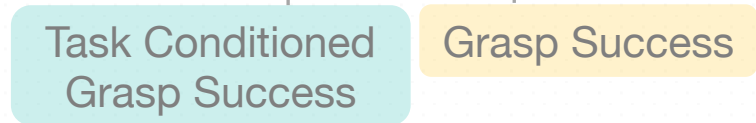
# Visuo-Motor Skills: Task-Oriented Grasping



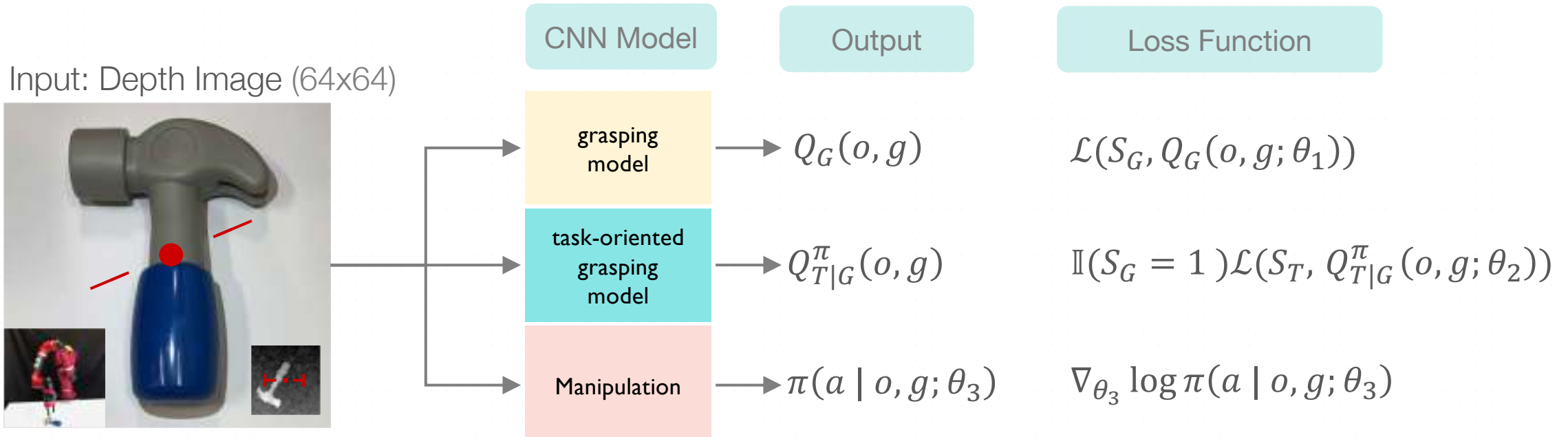
$$g^*, \pi^* = \operatorname{argmax}_{g, \pi} Q_T^\pi(o, g) \quad \text{Score Function}$$

$$Q_T^\pi(o, g) = P_\pi(S_T = 1 | S_G = 1, o, g) P(S_G = 1 | o, g)$$

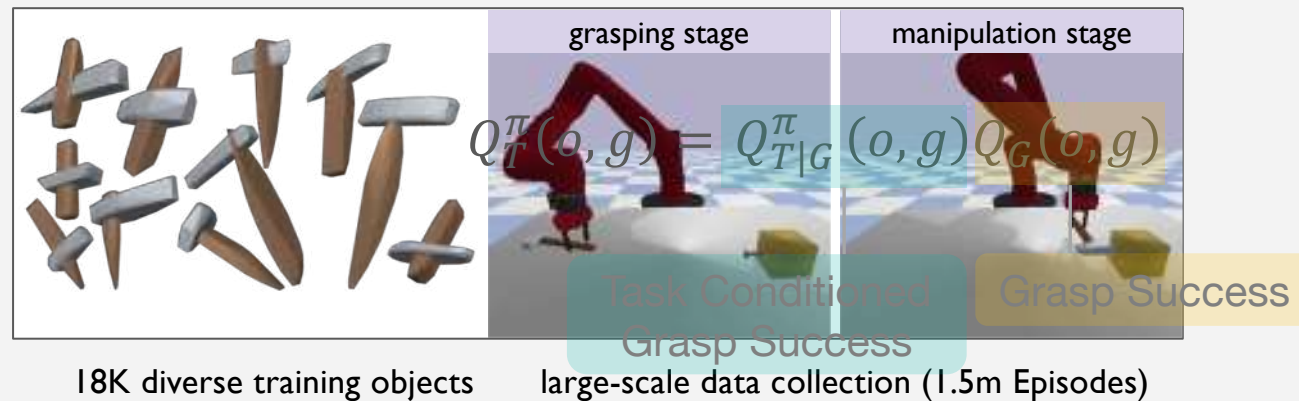
$$Q_T^\pi(o, g) = Q_{\text{Task Success}}^\pi(o, g) Q_G(o, g)$$



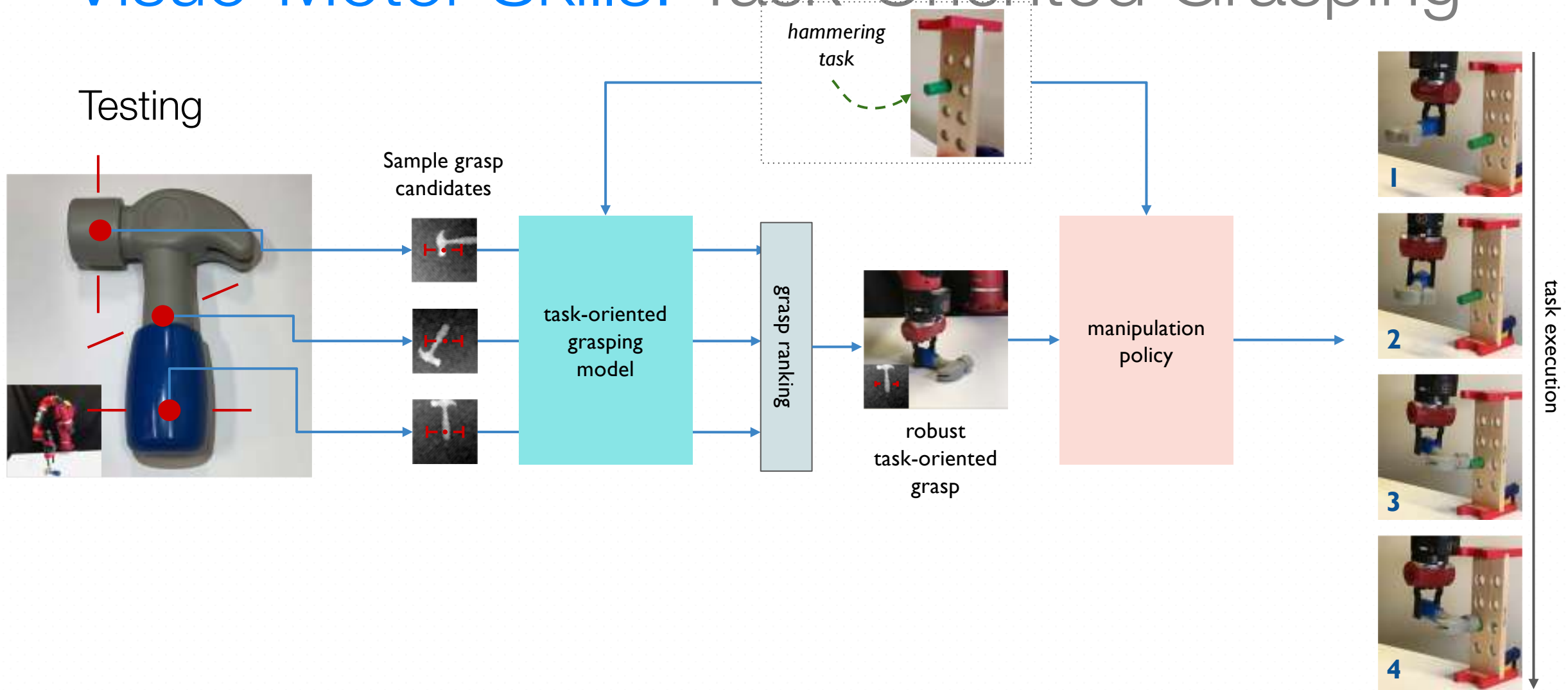
# Visuo-Motor Skills: Task-Oriented Grasping



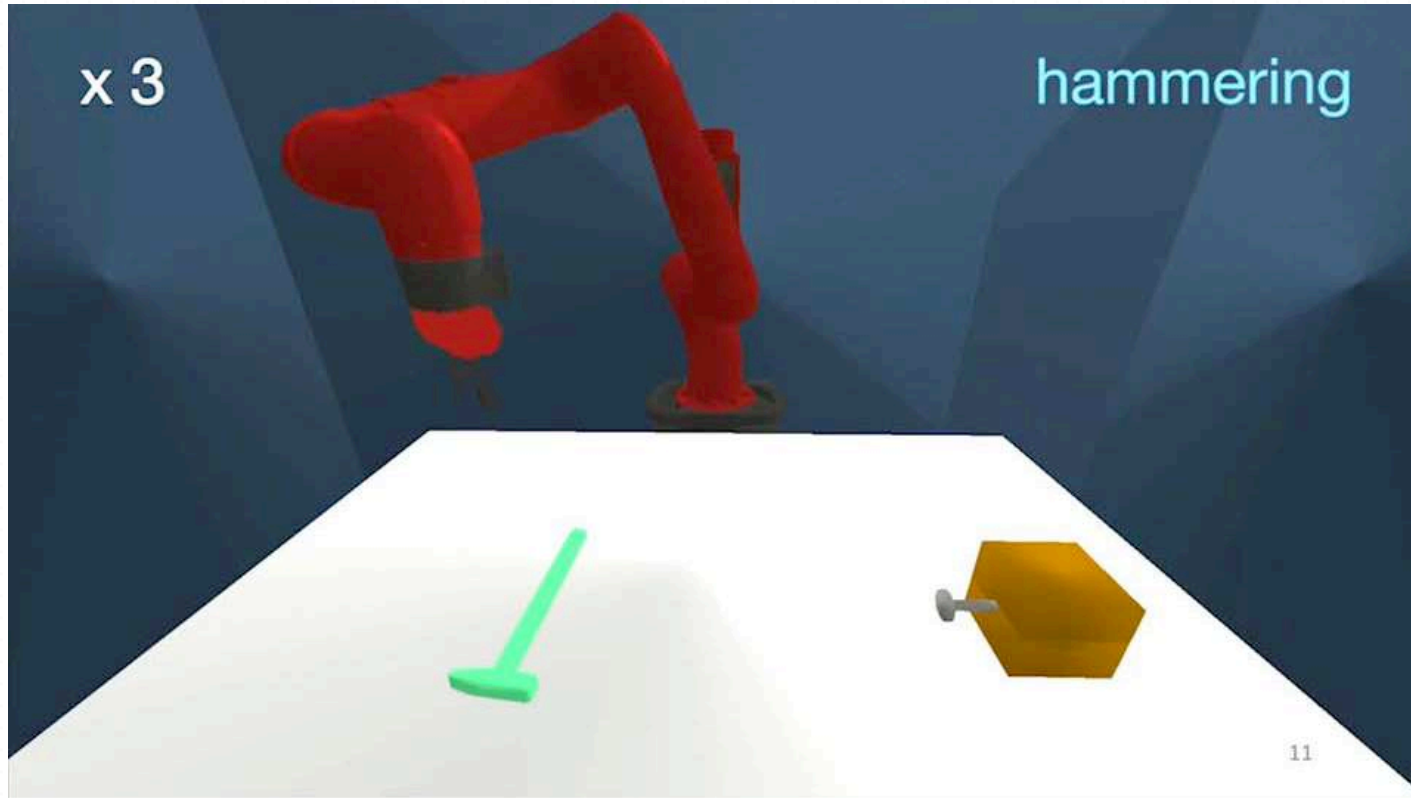
Training



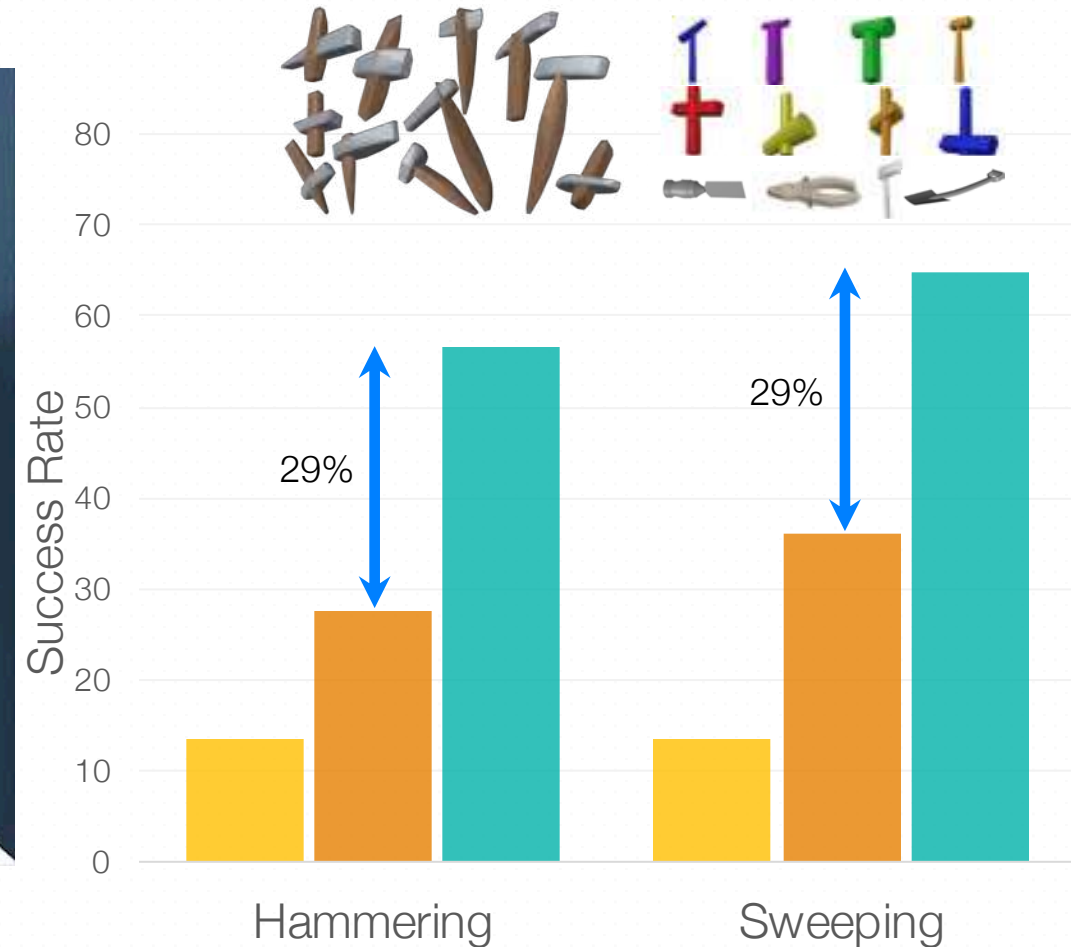
# Visuo-Motor Skills: Task-Oriented Grasping



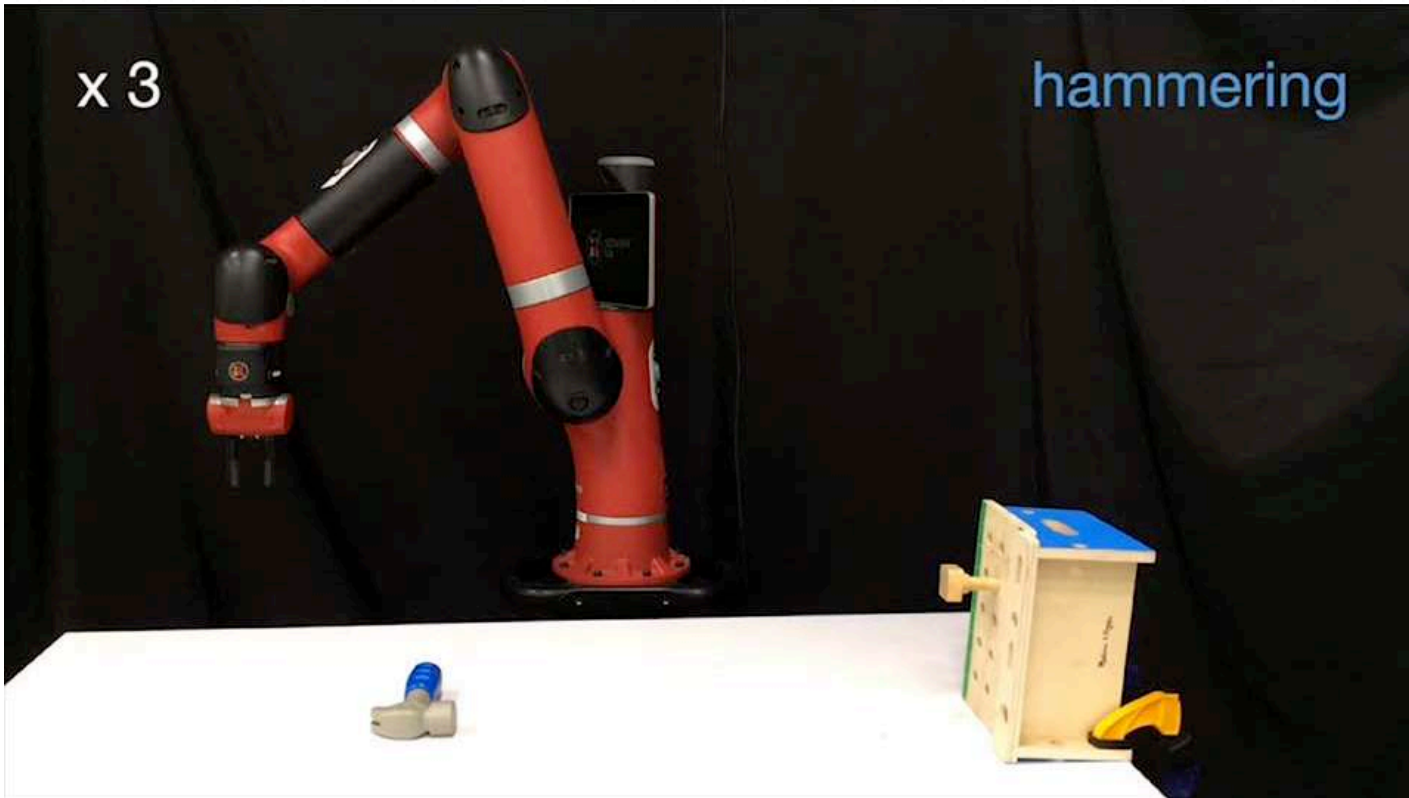
# Sequential Skills: Task-Oriented Grasping



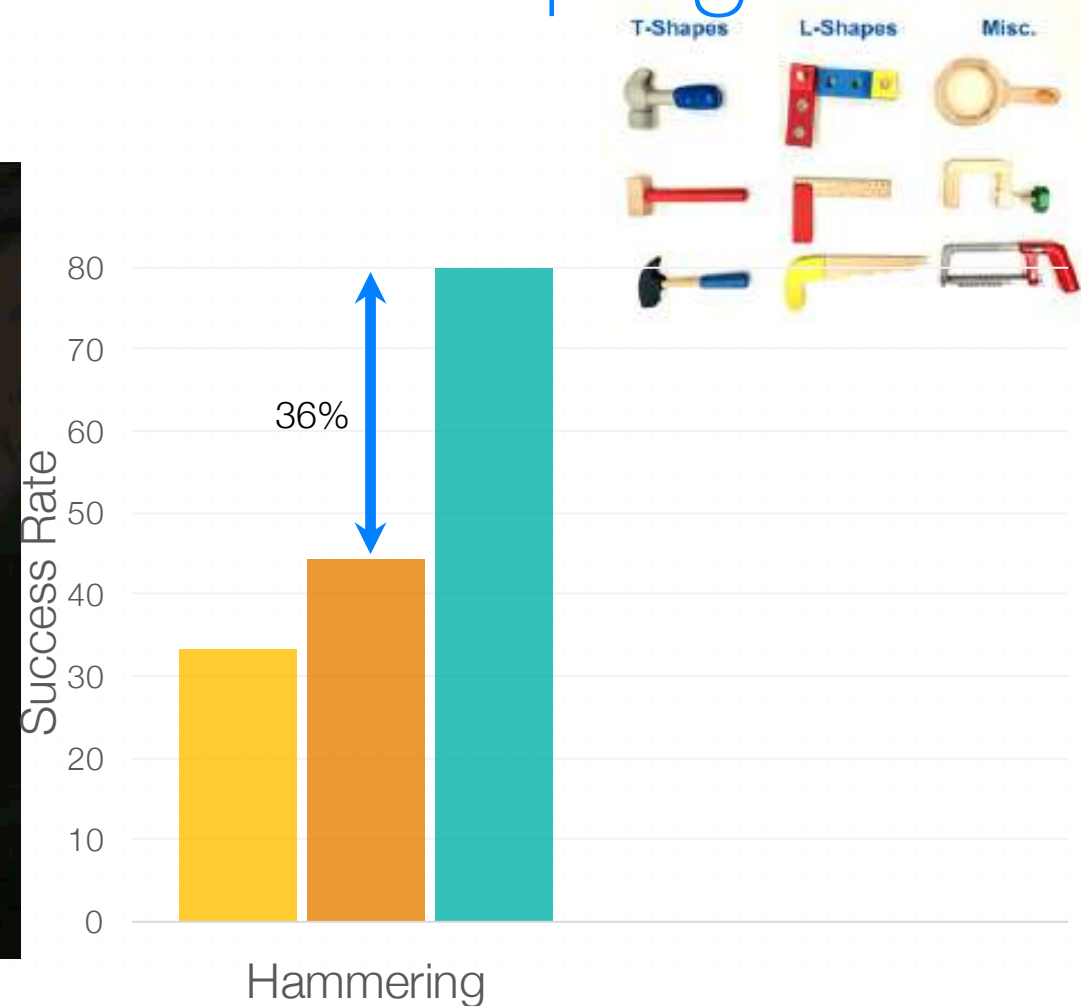
Trained Policy Rollout (Ours)  
Unseen Test Objects



# Sequential Skills: Task-Oriented Grasping



Trained Policy Rollout (Ours)  
Unseen Test Objects

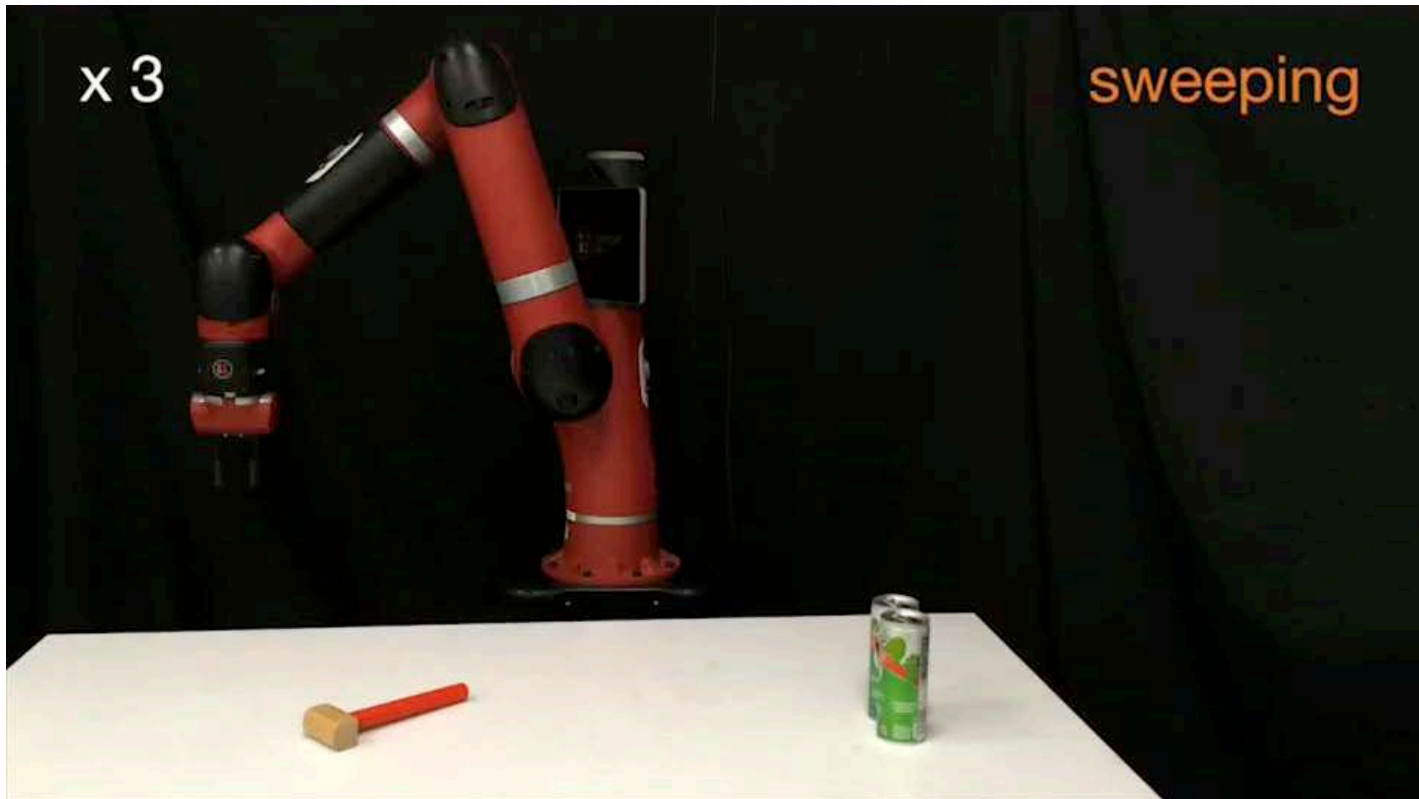


Antipodal Baseline Task-Agnostic Our Model

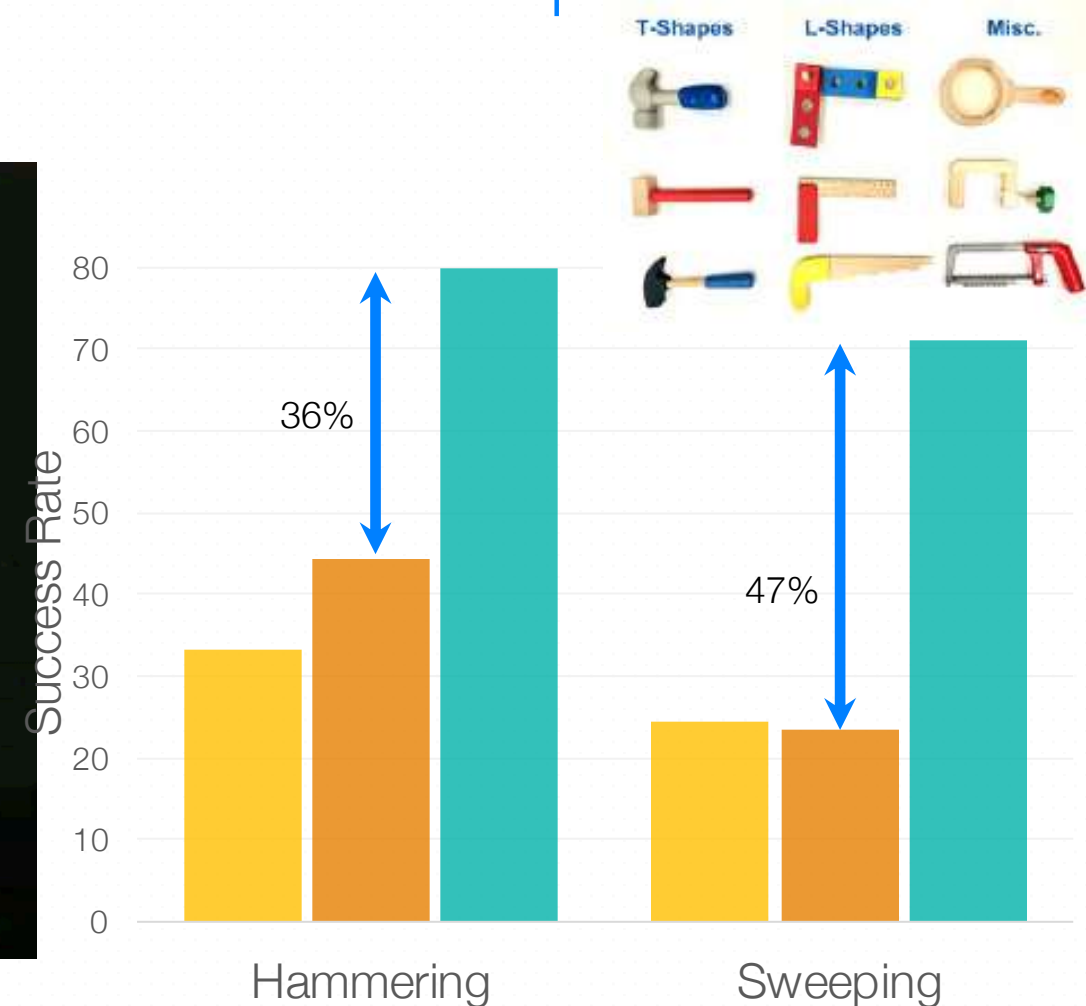
Two-Stage Optimization Joint Optimization



# Sequential Skills: Task-Oriented Grasping



Trained Policy Rollout (Ours)  
Unseen Test Objects

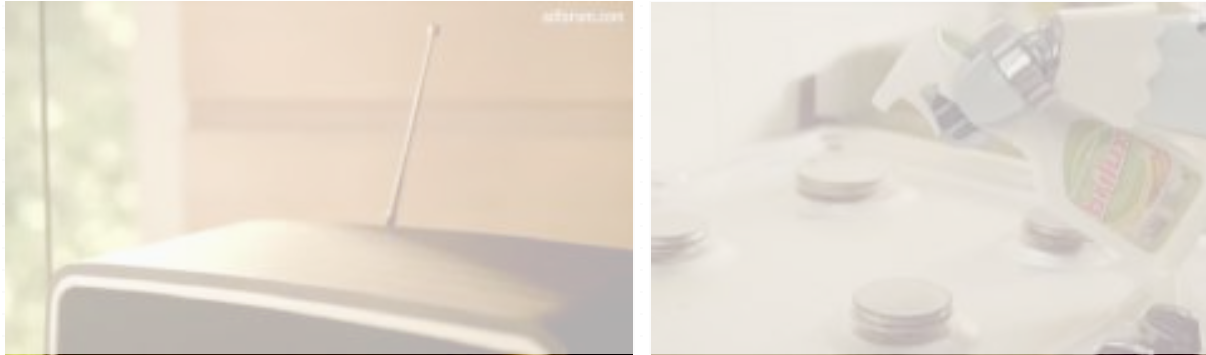


Antipodal Baseline Task-Agnostic Our Model

Two-Stage Optimization Joint Optimization



# Sequential Skills



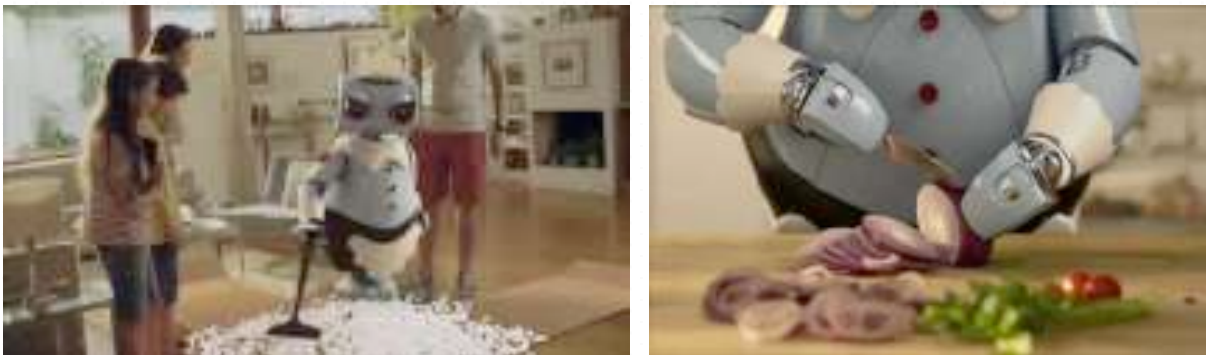
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Skills: Tool Use

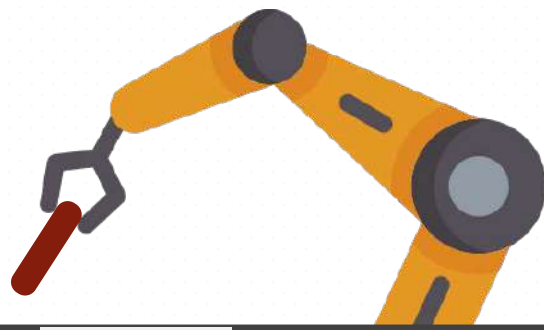
# Sequential Skills: Multi-Step Reasoning



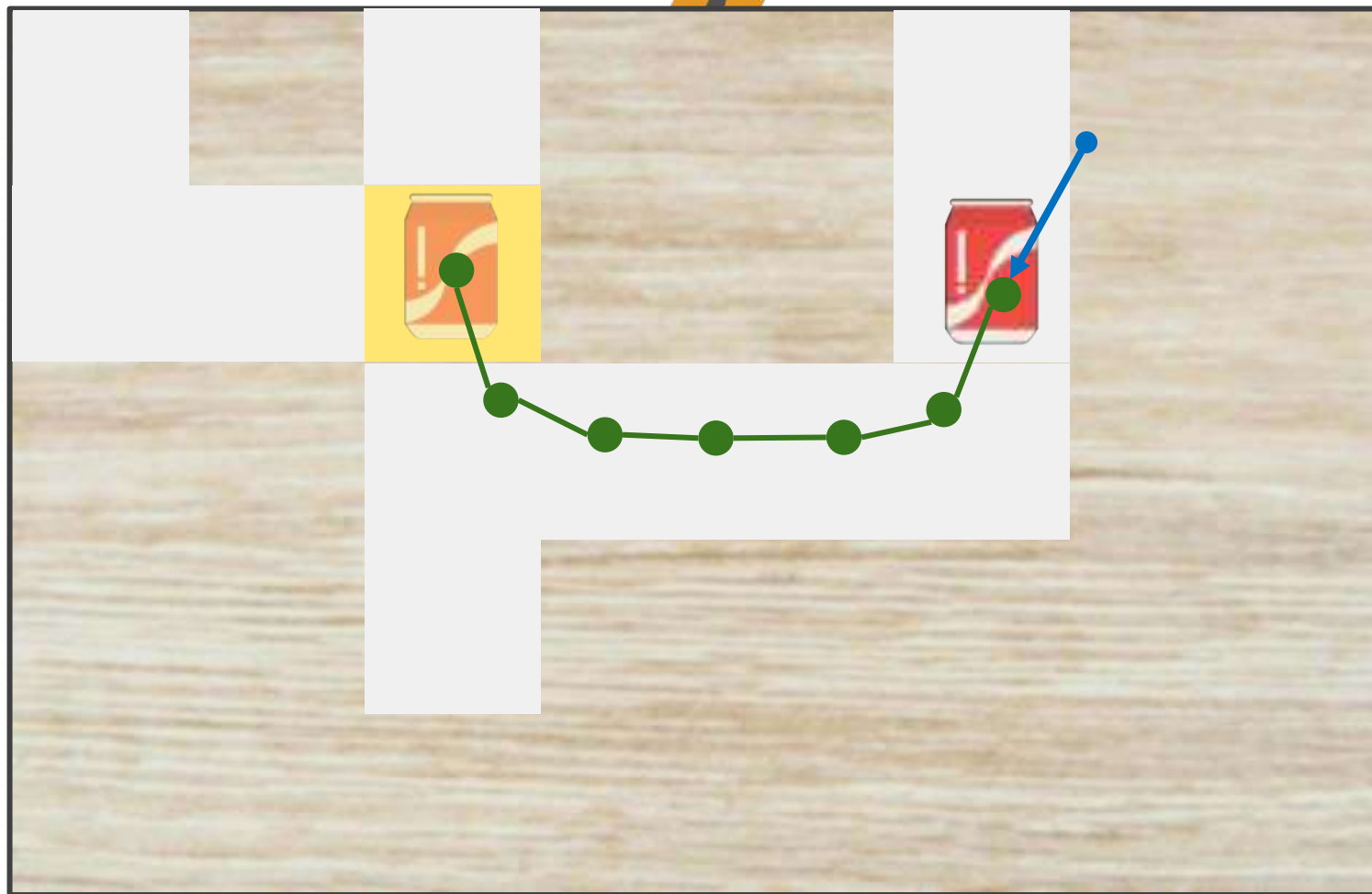
Skills: Multi-Step Reasoning

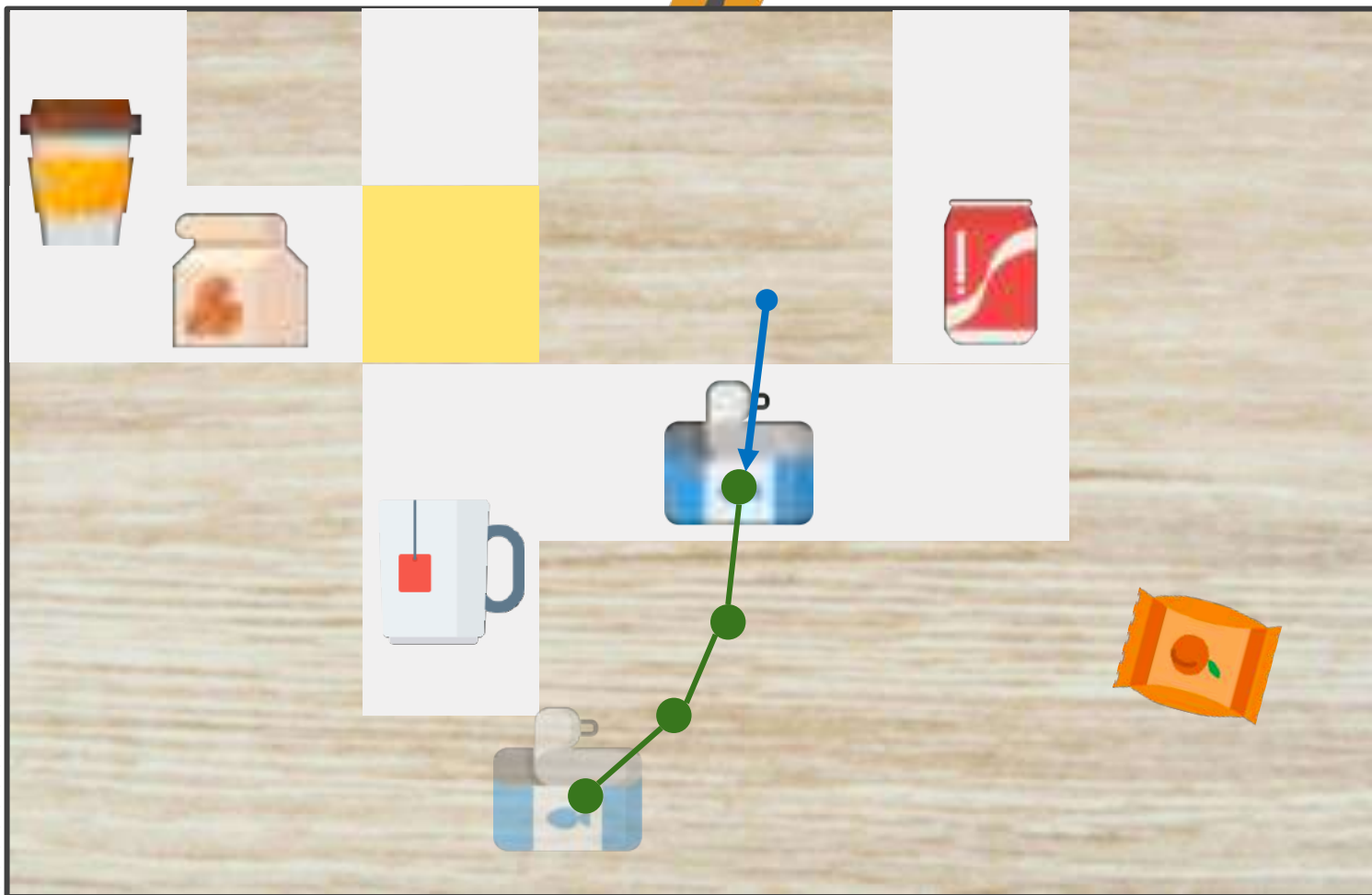
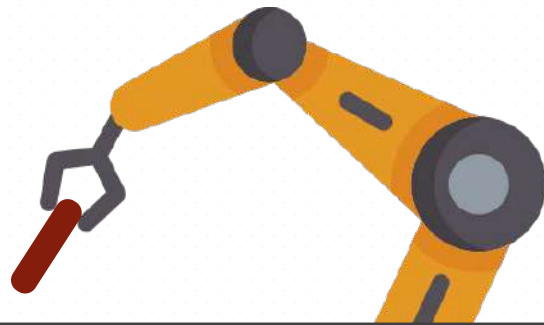


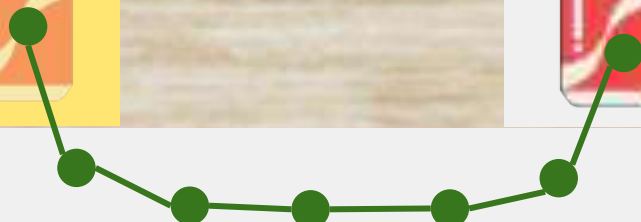
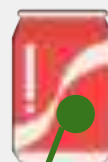
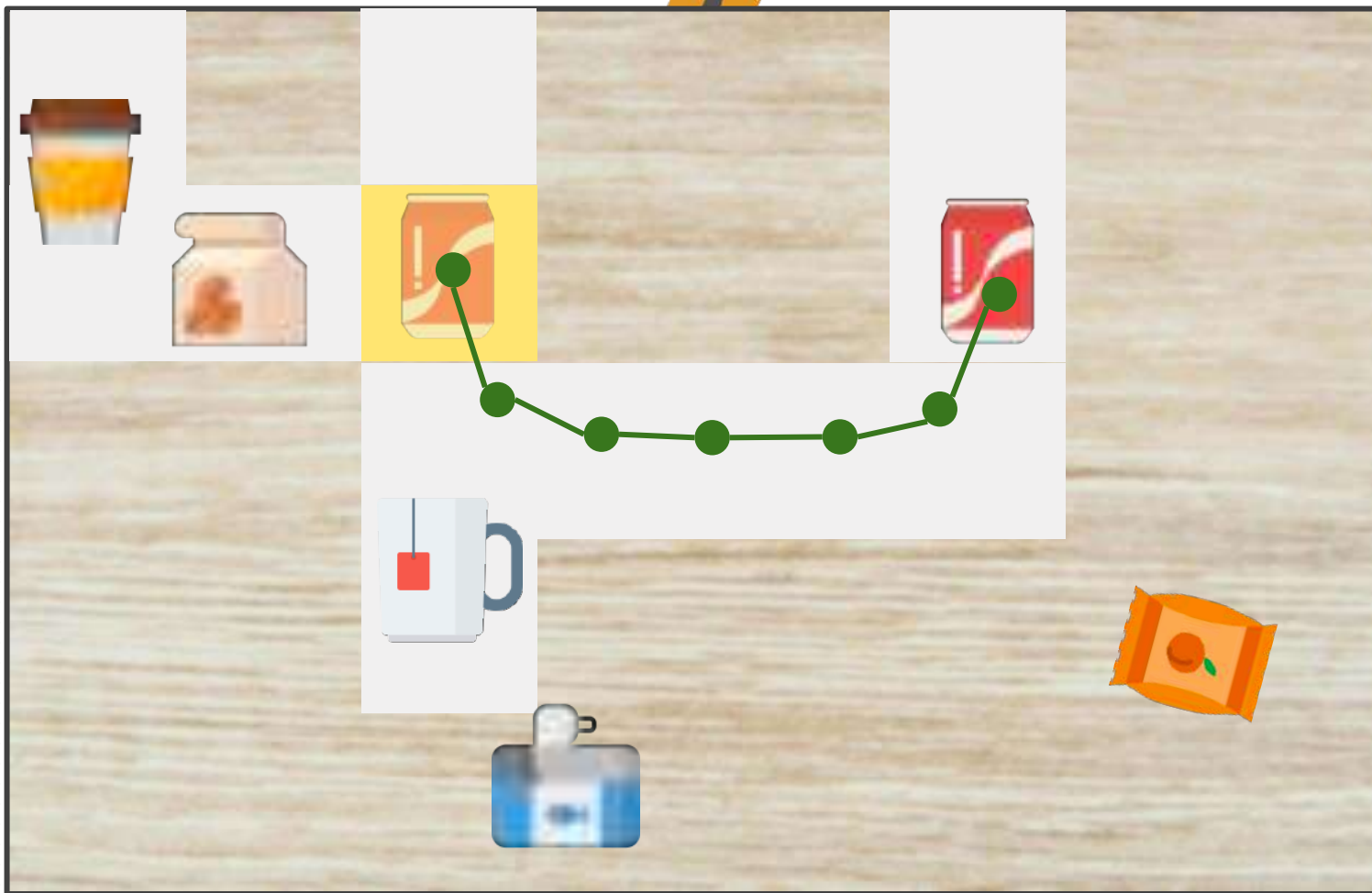
Generalization



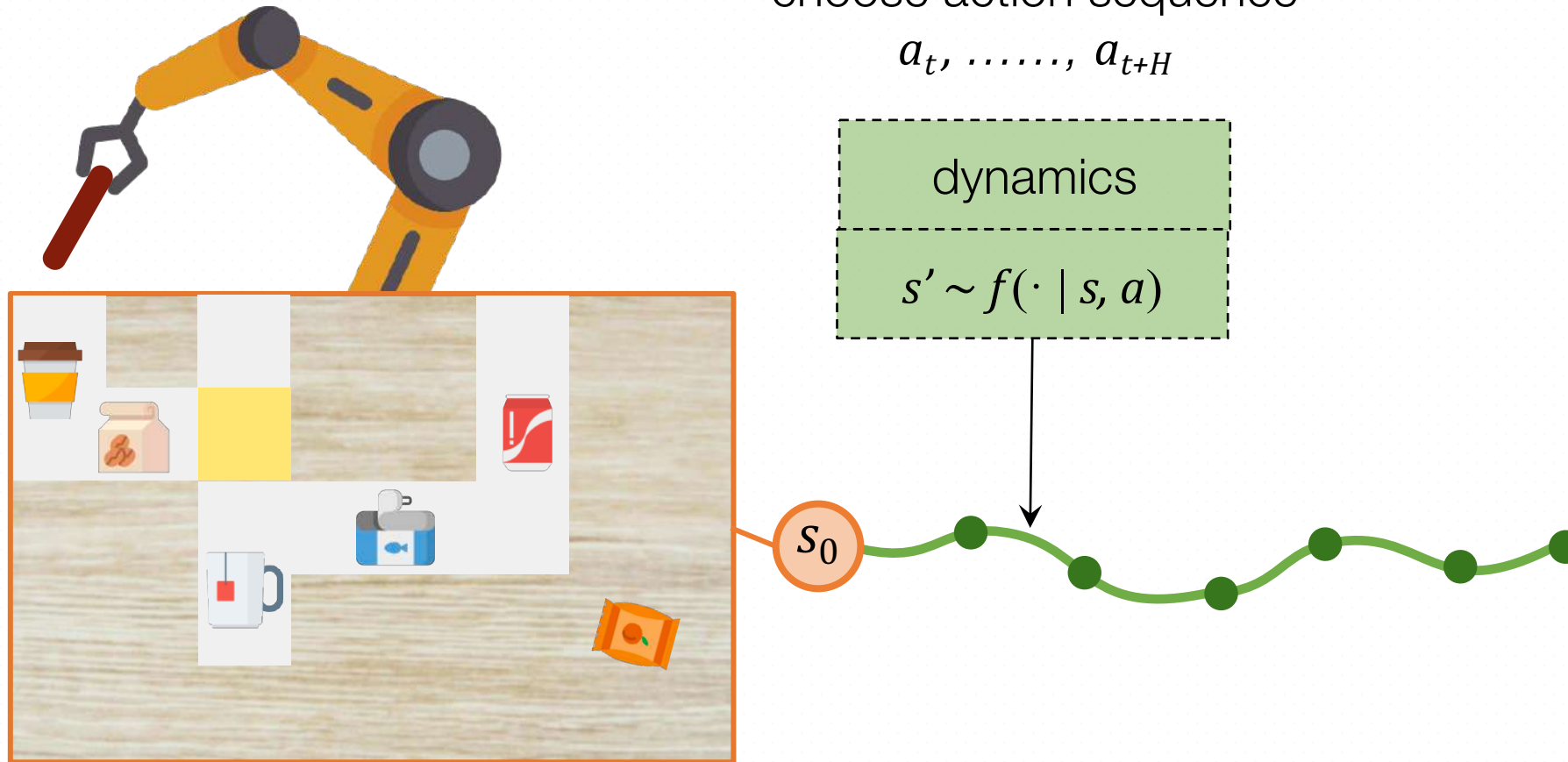
Can we learn multi-step reasoning in robotics  
under physical and semantic constraints







# Model-based learning



[Deisenroth et al, RSS'07], [Guo et al, NeurIPS'14], [Watter et al, NeurIPS'15], [Finn et al, ICRA'17], .....

# Model-based learning



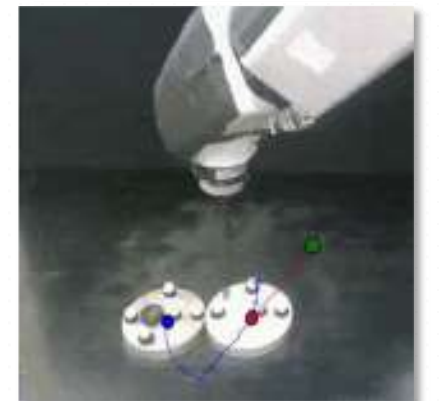
[Deisenroth et al. RSS'07]



[Agrawal et al. ICRA'16]

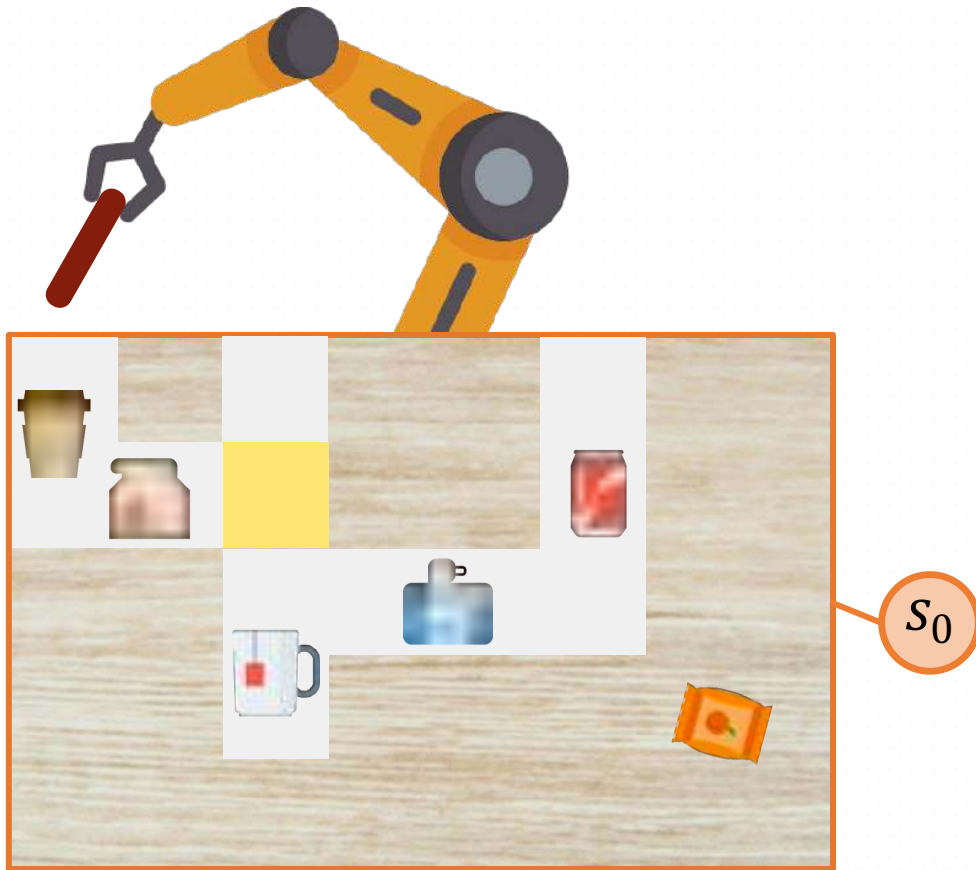


[Ebert et al. CoRL'17]



[Janer et al. ICRA'19]

# CAVIN: Hierarchical planning in learned latent spaces



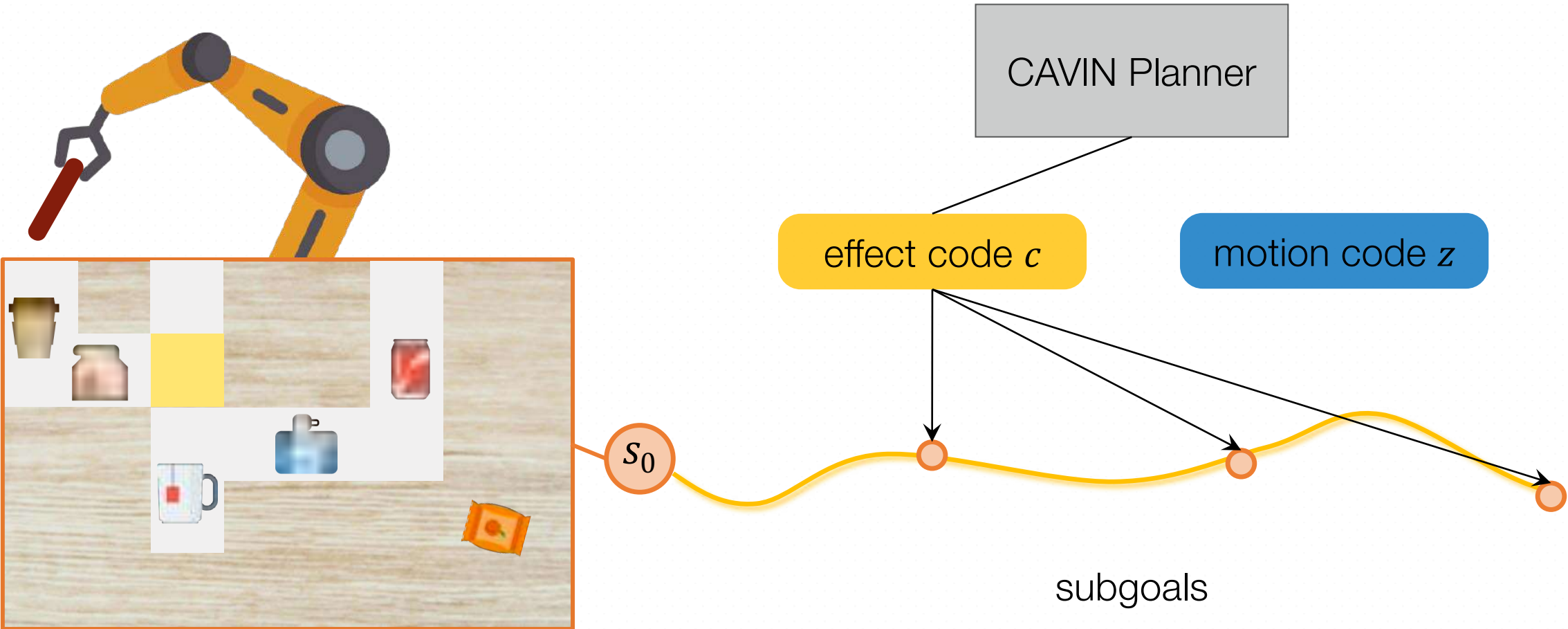
CAVIN Planner

effect code  $c$

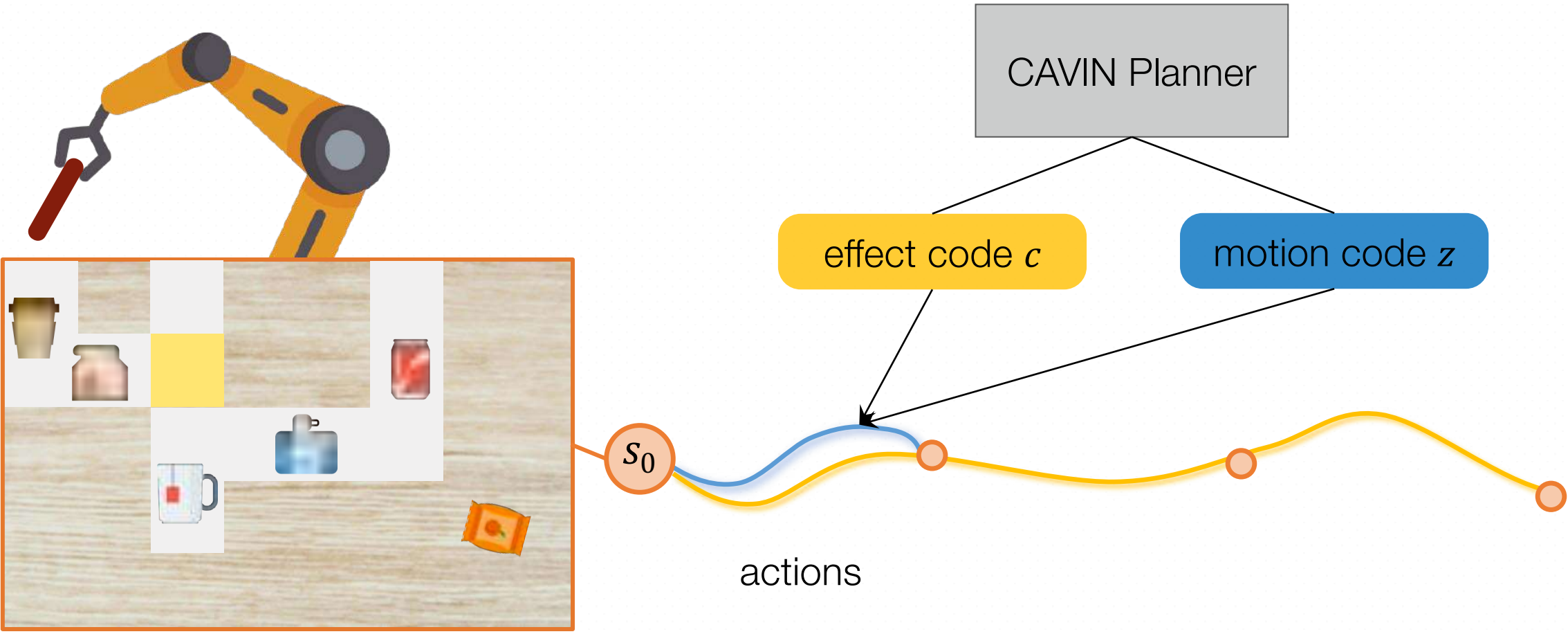
motion code  $z$

Leverage [Hierarchical Abstraction](#) in Action Space  
Without [Hierarchical Supervision](#)

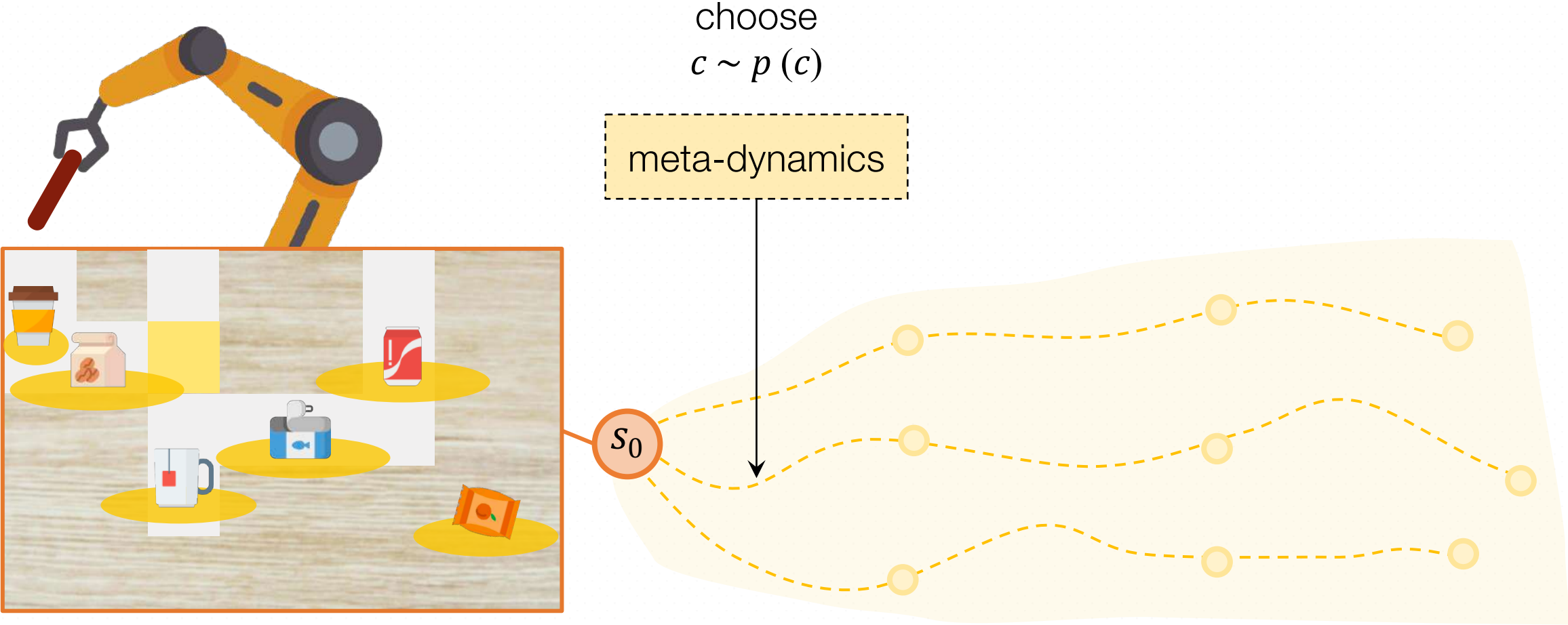
# CAVIN: Hierarchical planning in learned latent spaces



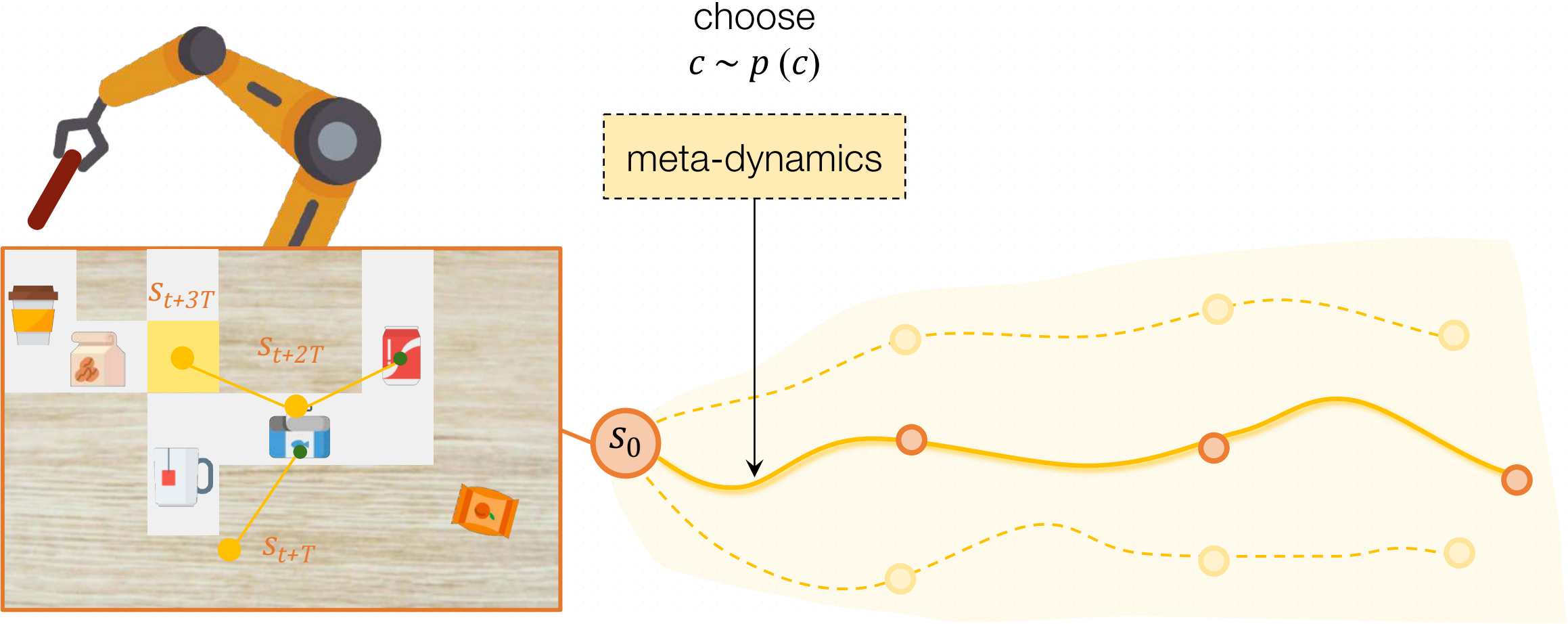
# CAVIN: Hierarchical planning in learned latent spaces



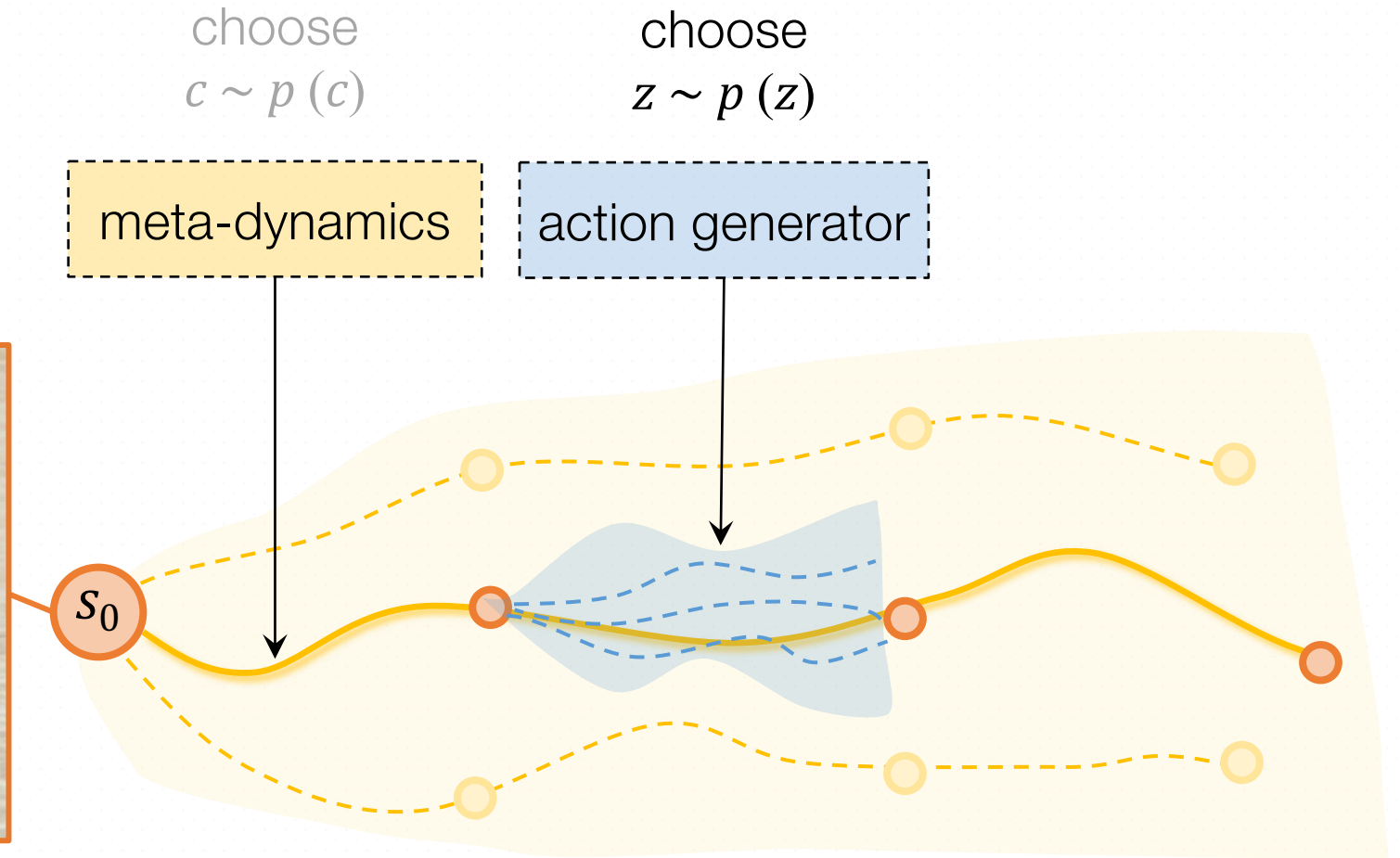
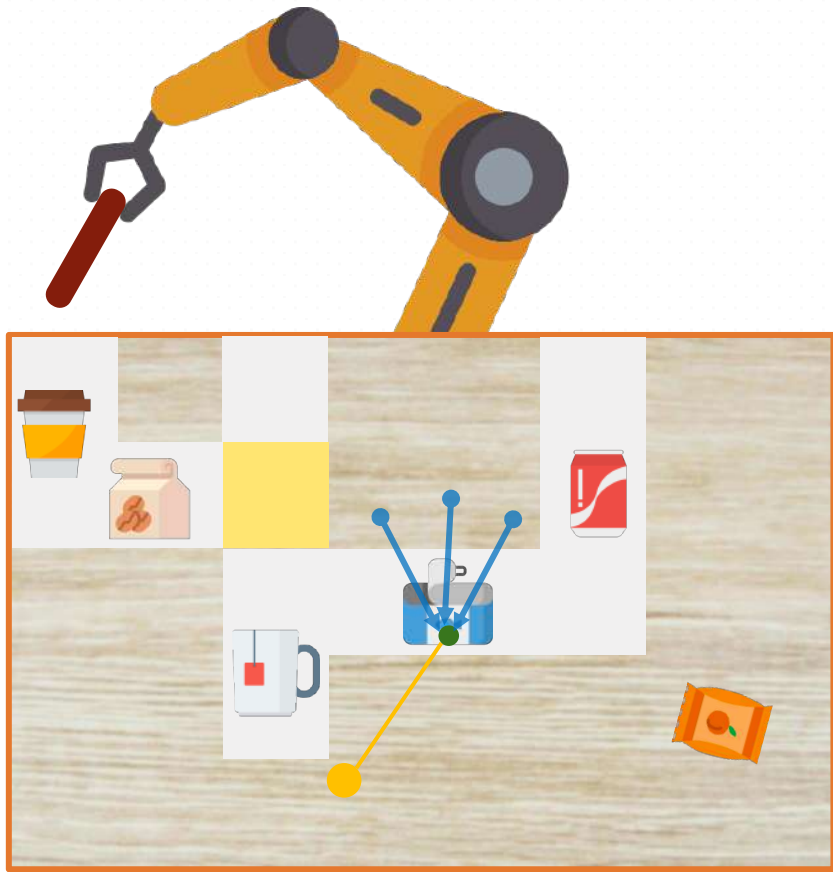
# CAVIN: Hierarchical planning in learned latent spaces



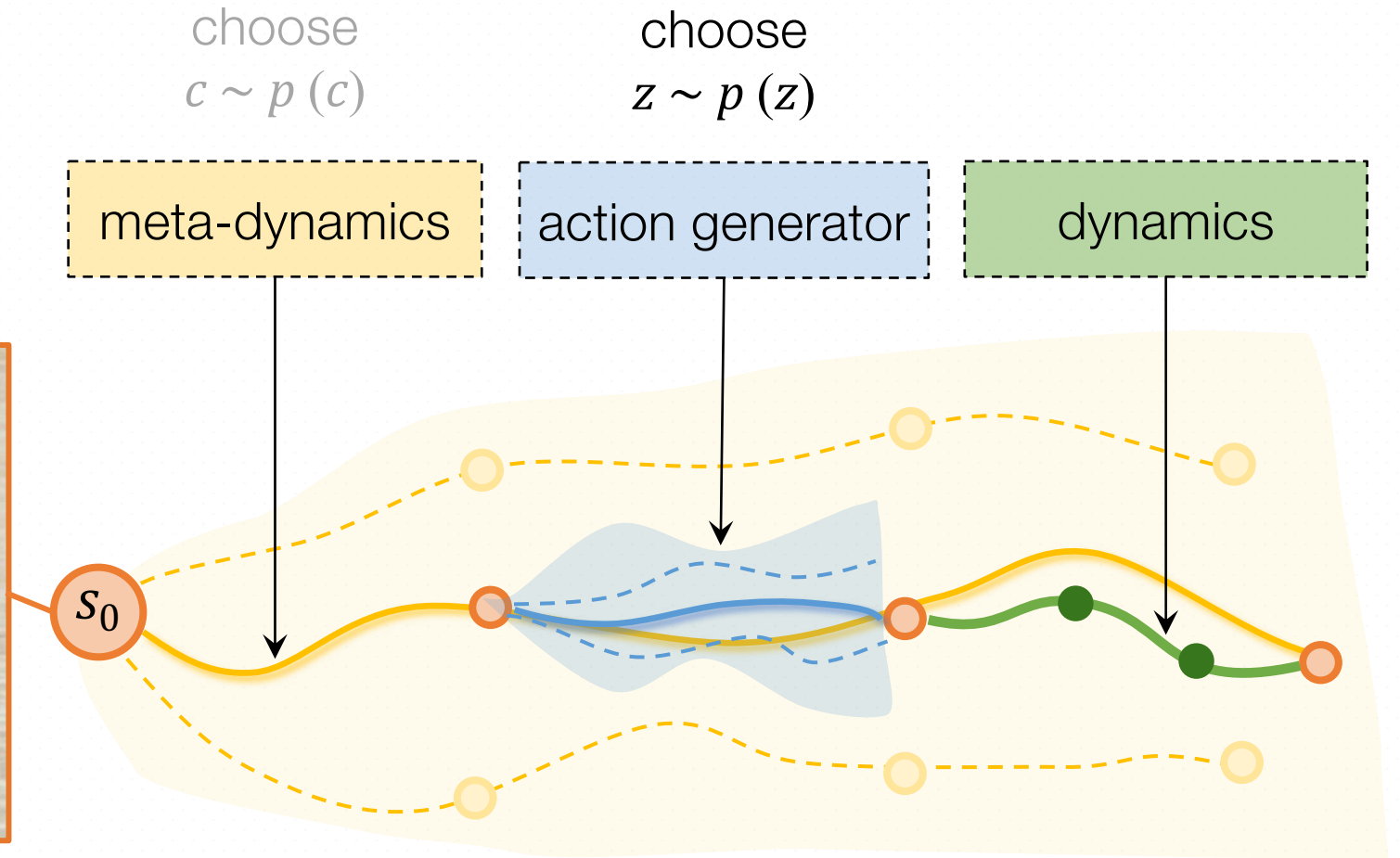
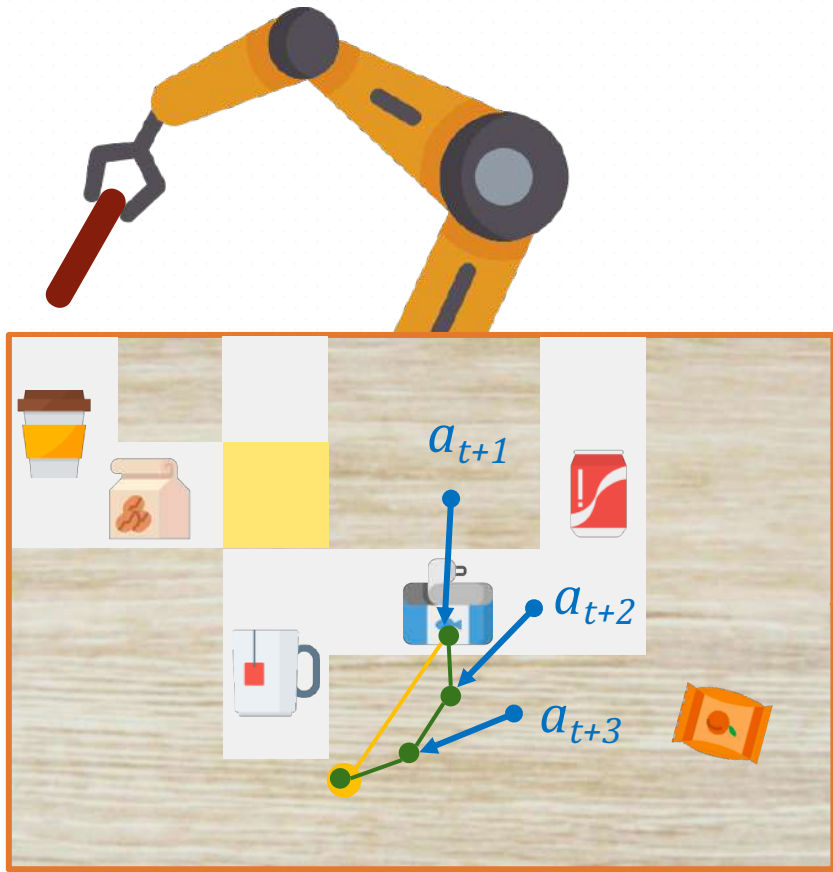
# CAVIN: Hierarchical planning in learned latent spaces



# Hierarchical planning in learned latent spaces

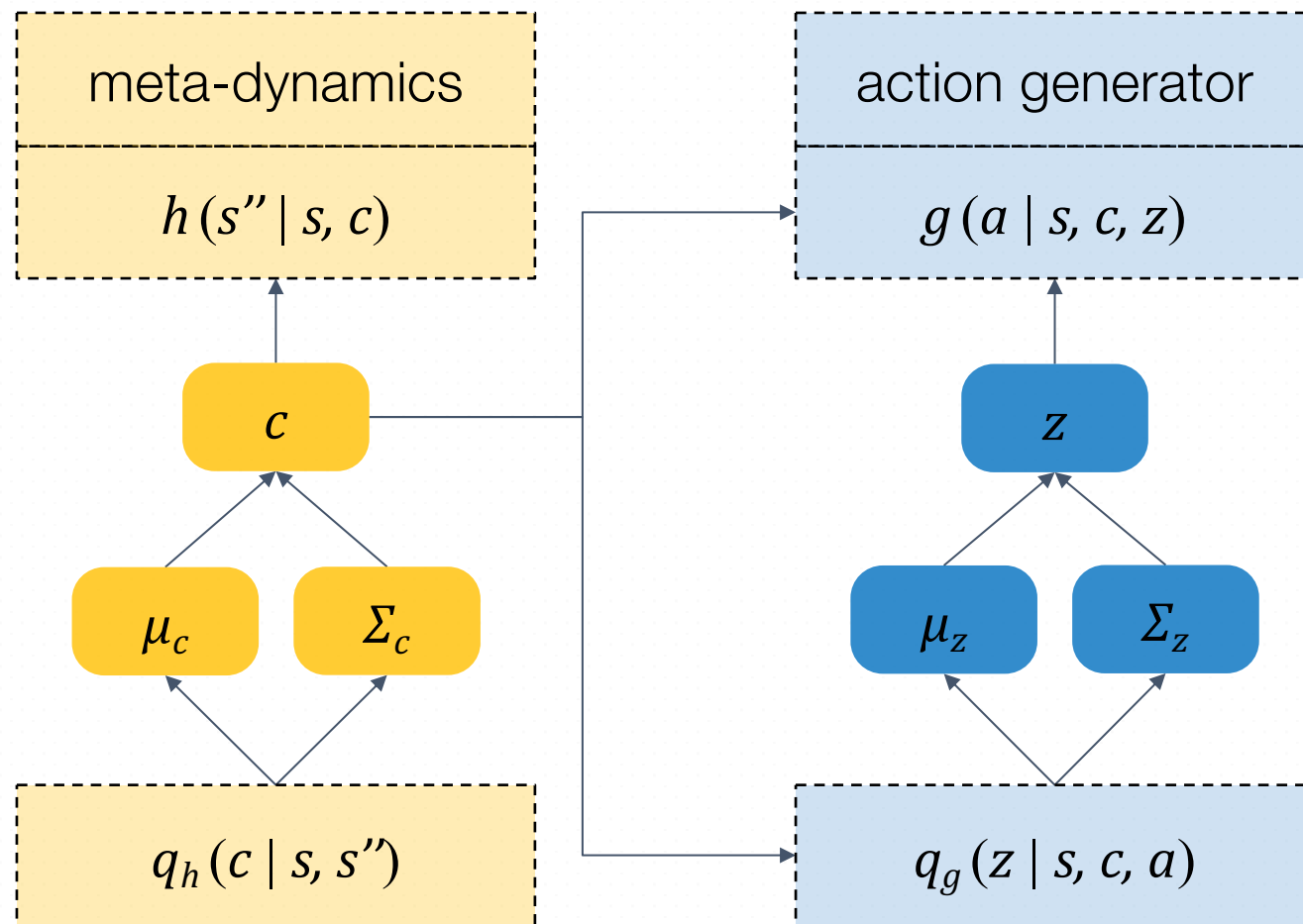
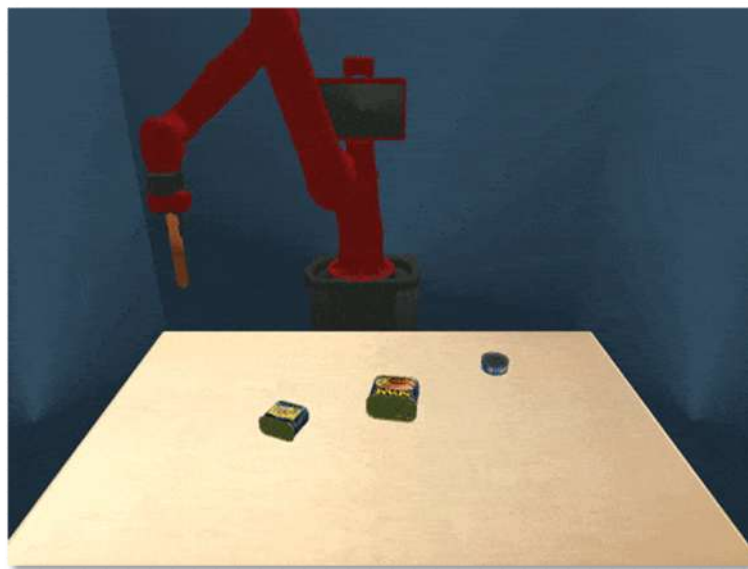


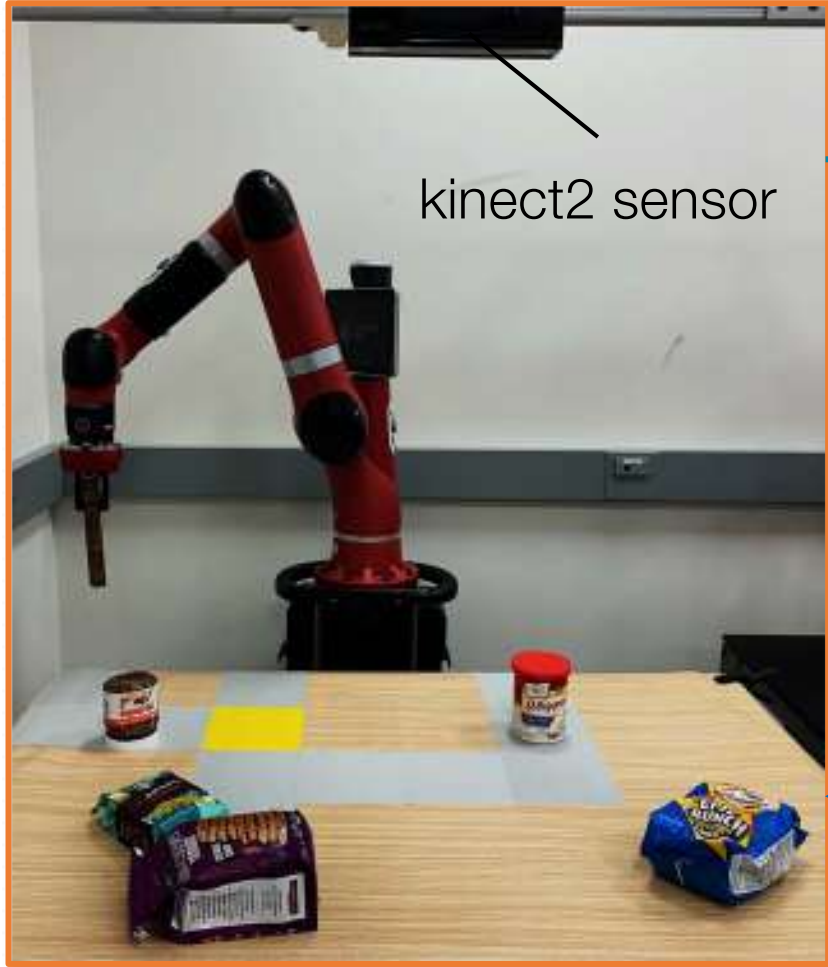
# CAVIN: Hierarchical planning in learned latent spaces



# Learning with cascaded variational inference

task-agnostic interaction





visual observation



preprocess

$S_t$

CAVIN Planner

action  
 $[ x, y, \Delta x, \Delta y ]$

# Tasks

clearing



Clear all objects within the area of **blue tiles**.

insertion



Move the target to the goal without traversing **red tiles**.

crossing



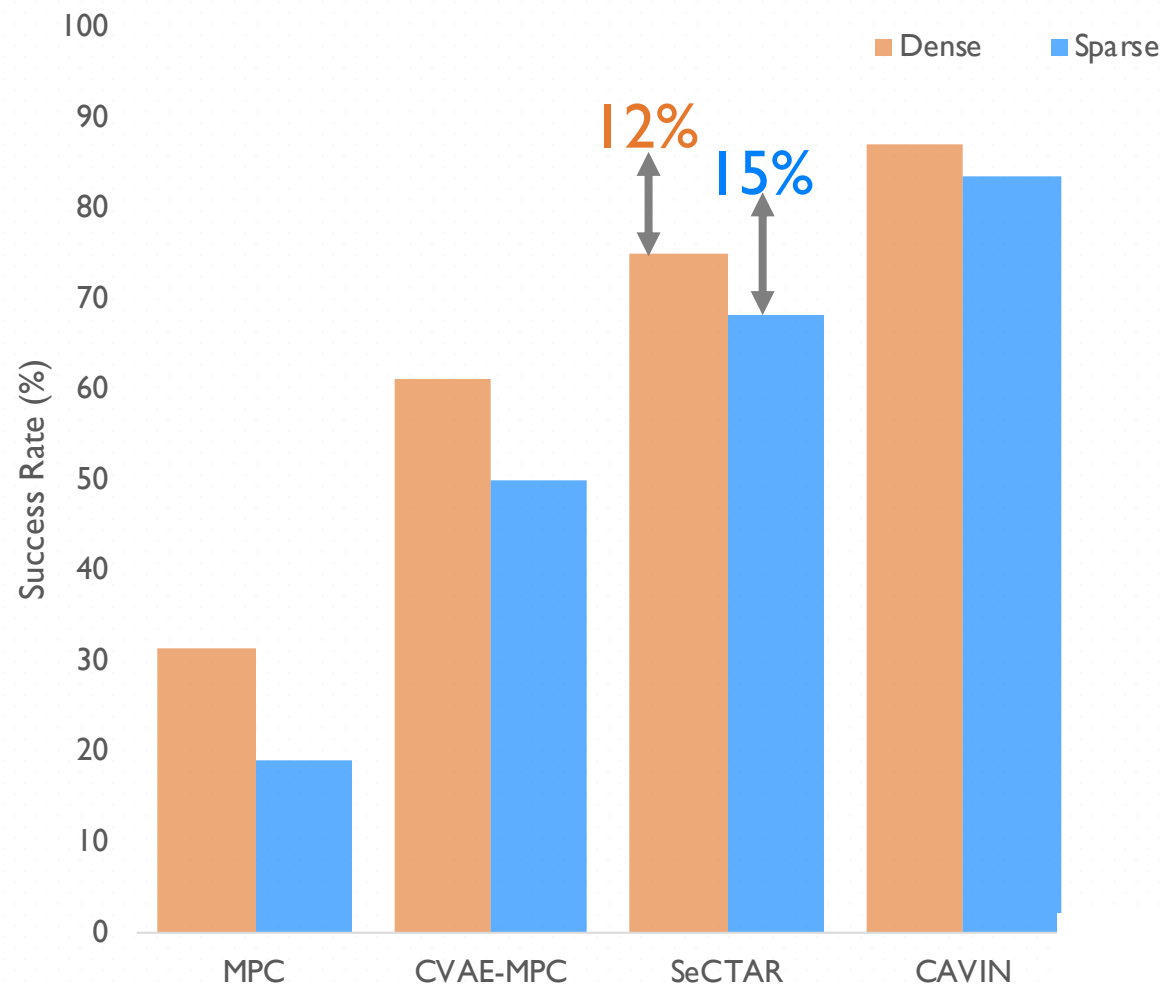
Move the target to the goal across **grey tiles**

Simulated

Real



# Quantitative Evaluation



Hierarchical Latent space dyn.

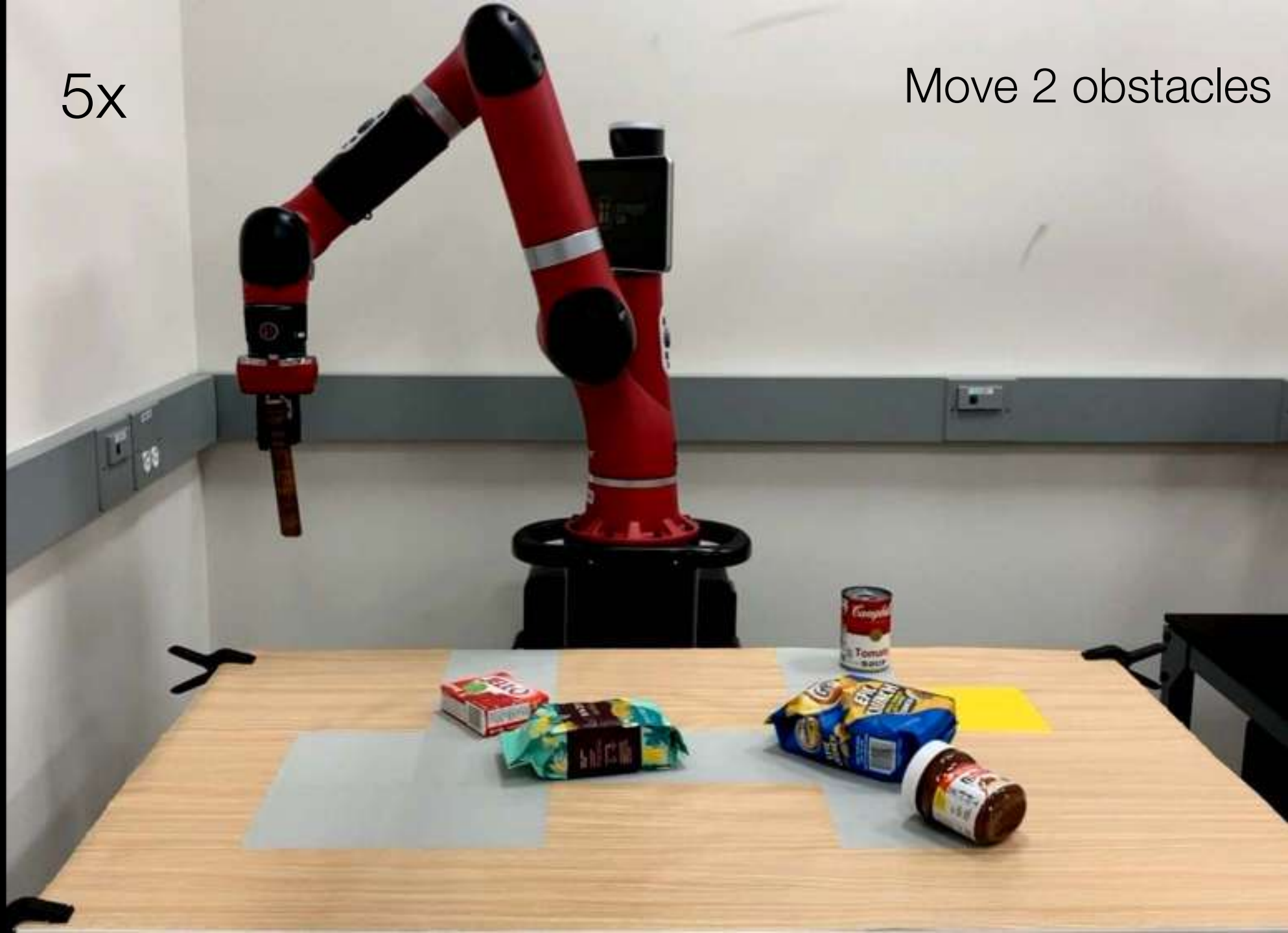


Better performance with sparse reward signal

Averaged over 3 Tasks  
with 1000 test instances each

5x

Move 2 obstacles



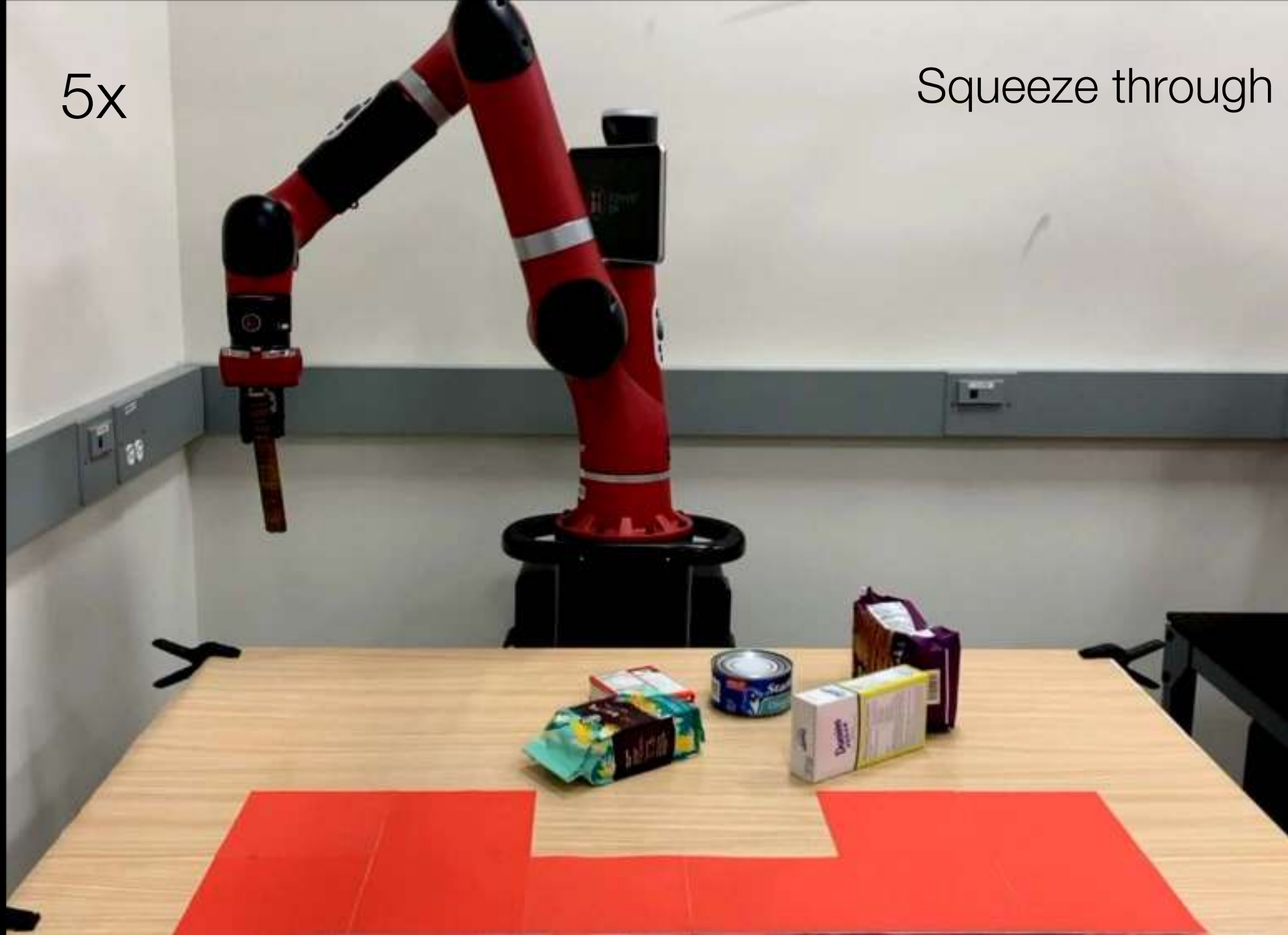
5x

Get around



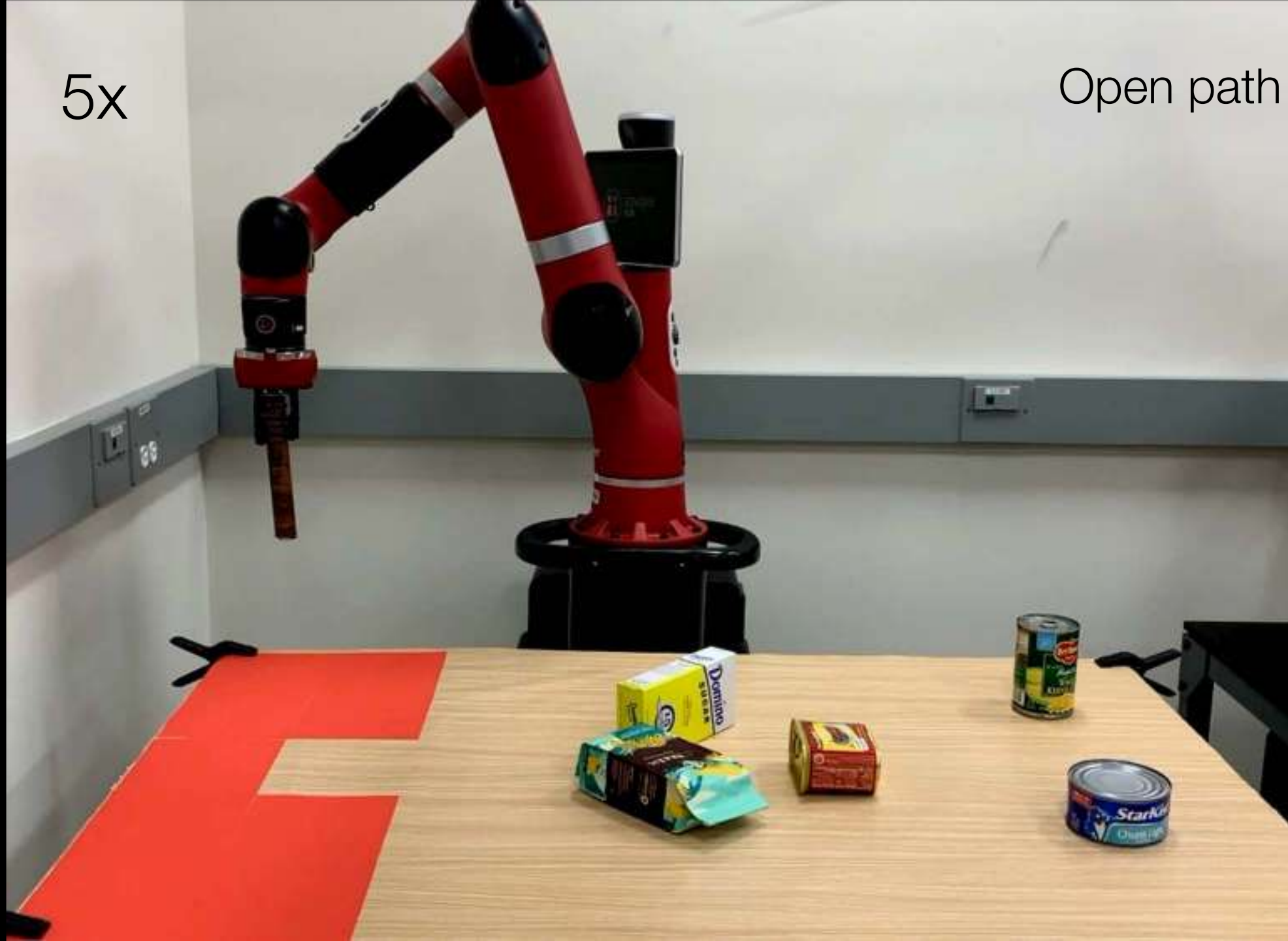
5x

Squeeze through

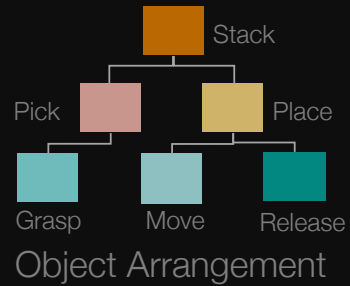


5x

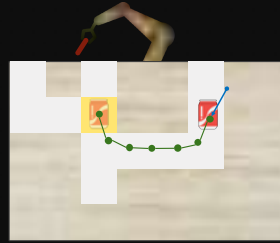
Open path



# Compositional Planning



RSS 2018,  
IJRR 2019

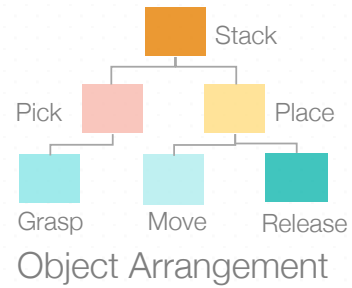


CoRL 2019 (oral)

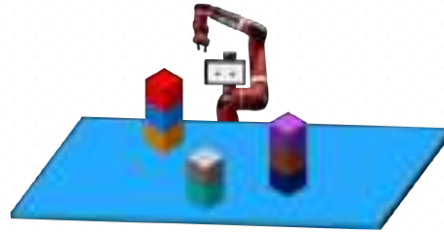


Self-Supervision and Structured Latent Variable Models  
lead to good representations that generalize

# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



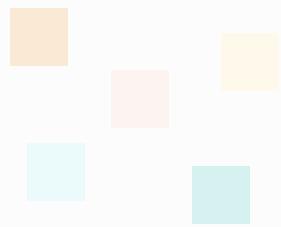
ICRA 2018



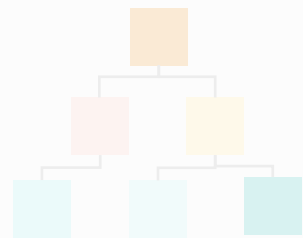
CVPR 2019 (oral)



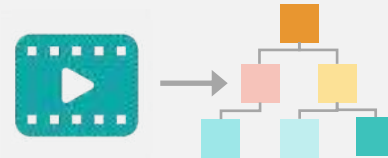
Visuo-Motor Skills



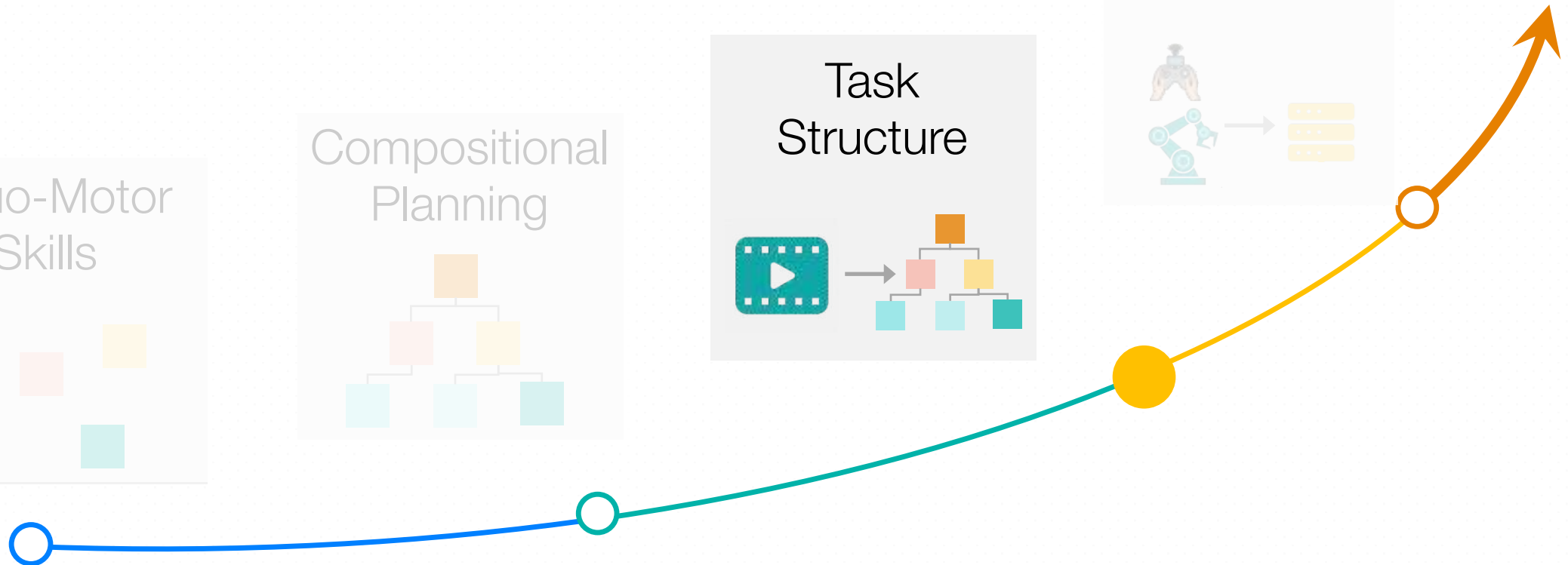
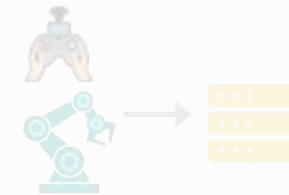
Compositional Planning



Task Structure



Data for Robotics



# Complex Task Structure

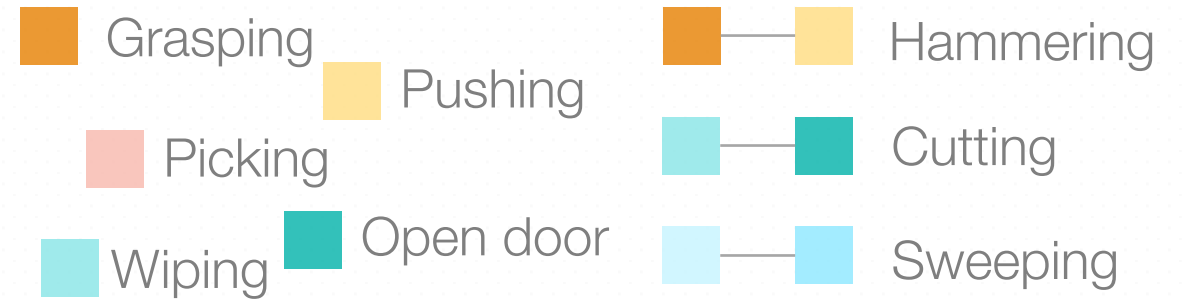


Visuo-Motor Skills

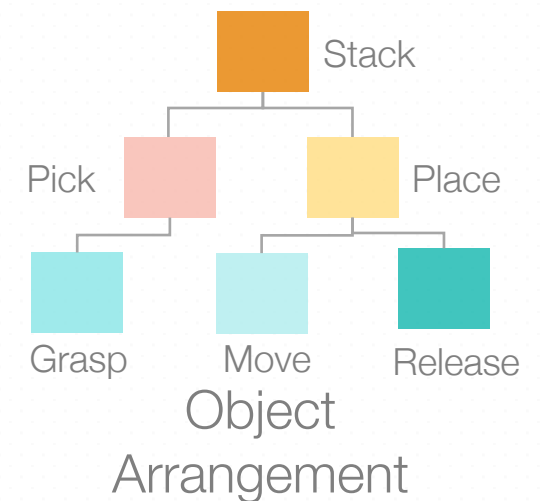
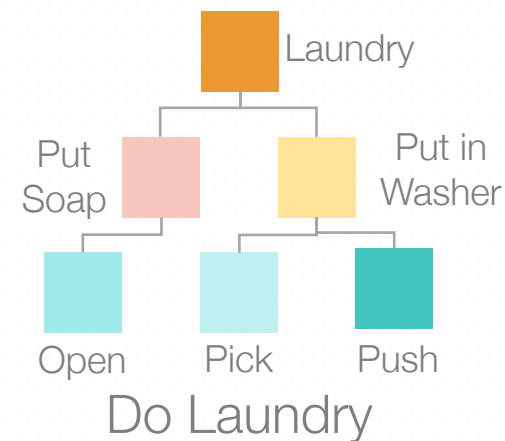


Complex Task Structure

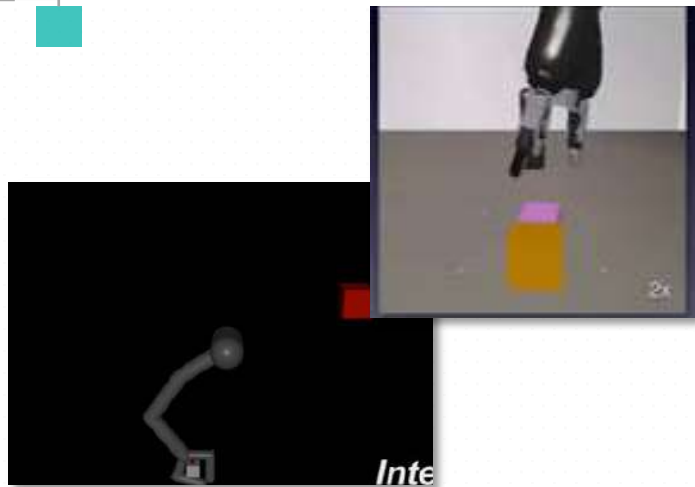
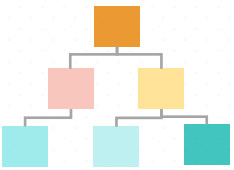
## Visuo-Motor Skills



## Complex Task Structure

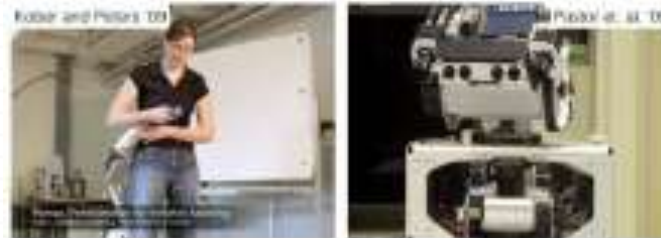


# Compositional Planning: Current Paradigm



Reinforcement Learning

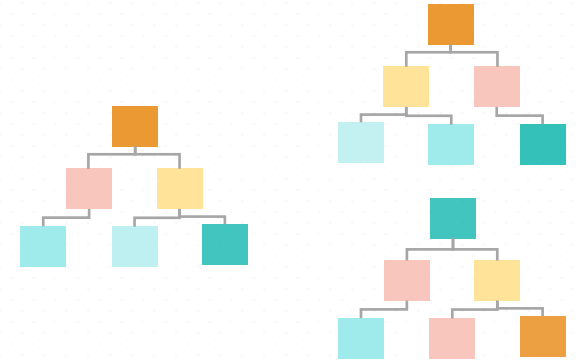
- Sample Inefficient
- Multi-step Structured Tasks
- Needs non-trivial Reward Shaping



Imitation Learning

- Task Segmentation is non-trivial
- Multi-modality of Search Space
- Fixed Permutation of Primitives

Desired



Train  $\neq$  Test

Meta Imitation Learning

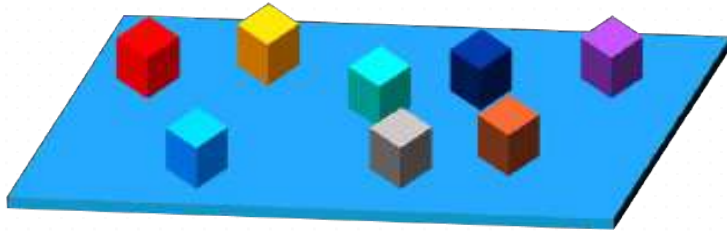
- New Task Structures
- Few-Shot performance
- Input State as Video

RL: [Schaal 1997], [Chebotar et al., '17], [Yahya et al., '16], [James et al., '17], [Popov et al., '17], [Zhu et al. 18], [Hausman et al. 18]

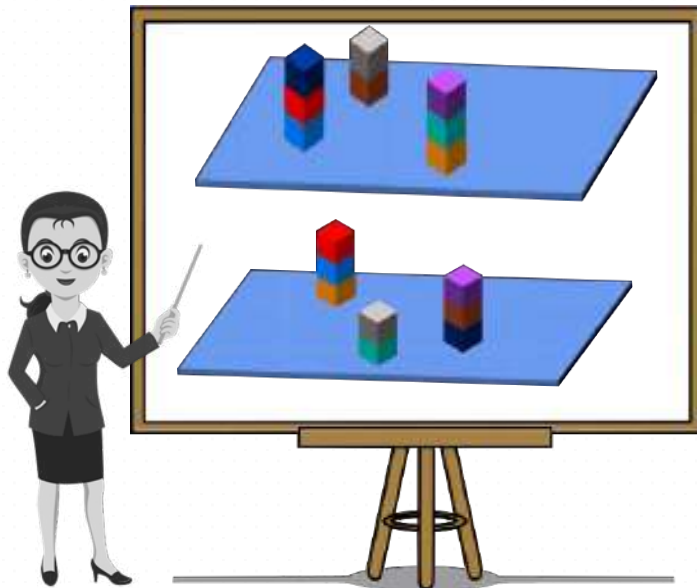
Imitation: [Calinon et al 2008], [Argall et al 2009], [Kober, Peters, et al. 09], [Pastor et al, 09], [Schulman et al. 2013], [Kroemer et al, 15], [Garg et al 2017]

# Compositional Planning: Challenge

Task Domain

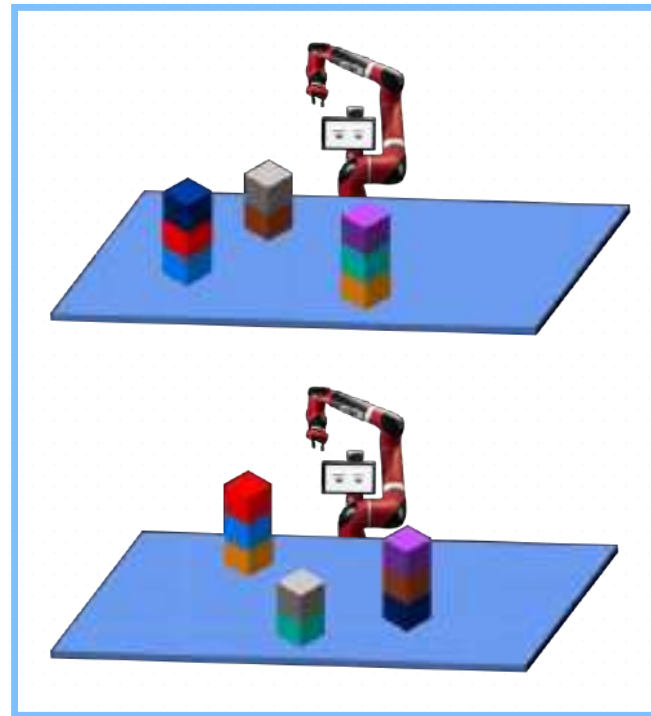


Instructional Demos



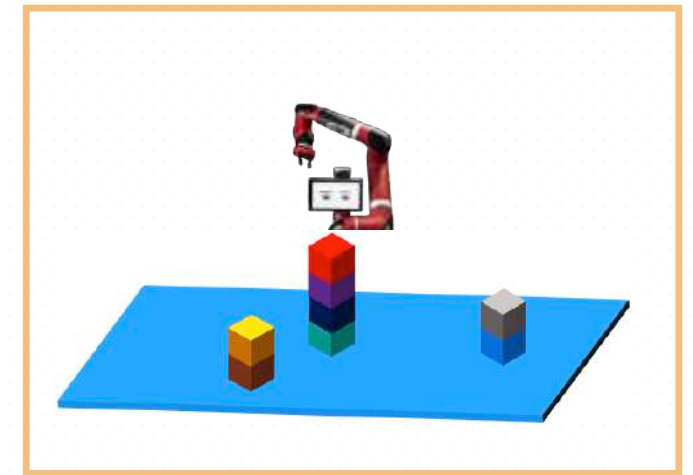
I. Learn **Multiple Tasks**  
in the Same Domain

Training Tasks

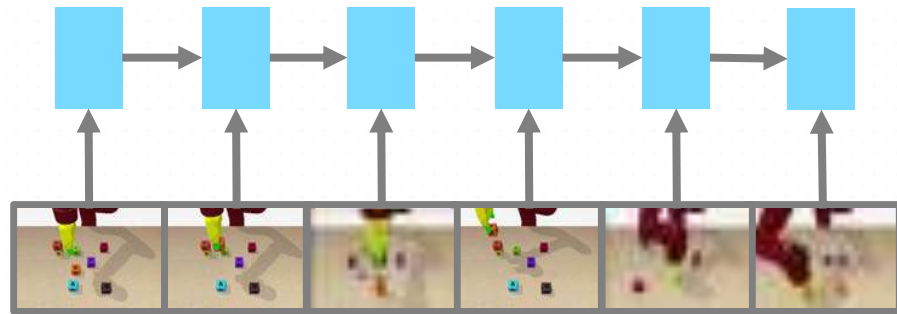


II. Generalize to New  
Tasks with a **Single Demo**

Test Task

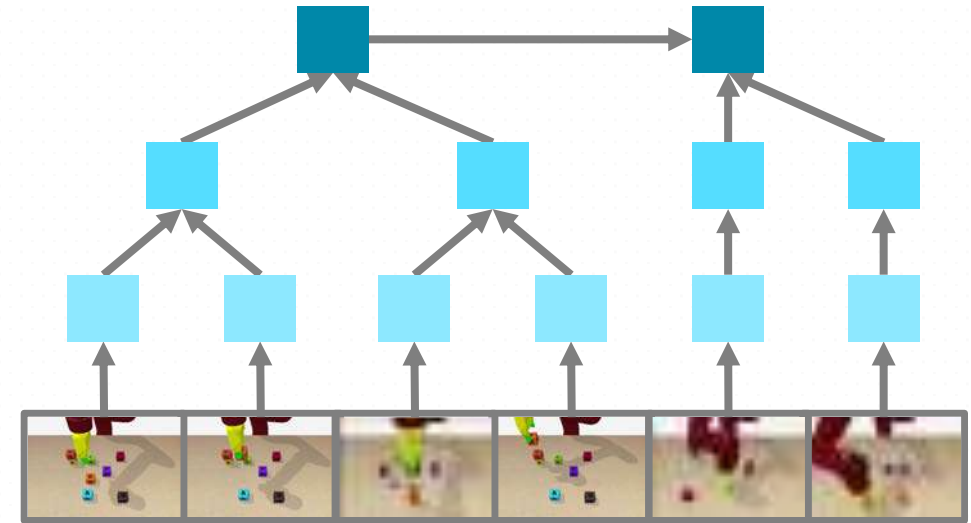


# Compositional Planning



[Duan et al. 17; Finn et al. 2017;  
Wang et al. 2017; Yu et al. 2018]

Models input demonstration  
as a **flat sequence**



Our Method  
[ICRA'18], [CVPR'19], [IROS'19]

Models input demonstration  
as a **Compositional Hierarchy**

One Shot Imitation Learning from Videos

# Compositional Planning: Task Programming

Block Stacking (...):

```
while (done):
```

```
  pick_and_place (RED, BLUE):
```

```
    pick (RED):
```

```
      move_to (RED)
```

```
      ↓ Grasp (RED)
```

```
      <end> Pop
```

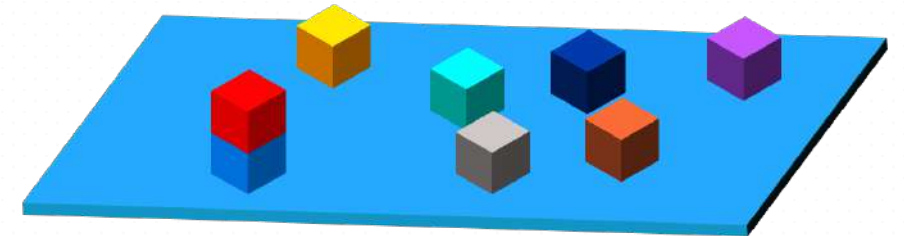
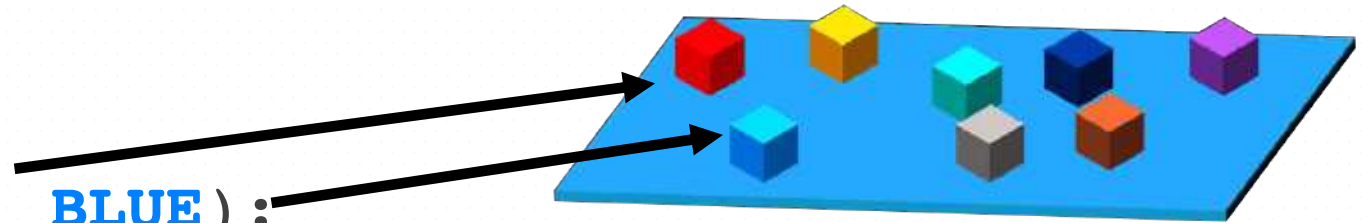
```
    place (BLUE):
```

```
      move_to (BLUE)
```

```
      ↓ Release (RED)
```

```
      <end> Pop
```

```
  <end> Pop
```



Task 1

Sub-task 1


Move Red-block on top of Blue

# Compositional Planning: Task Programming

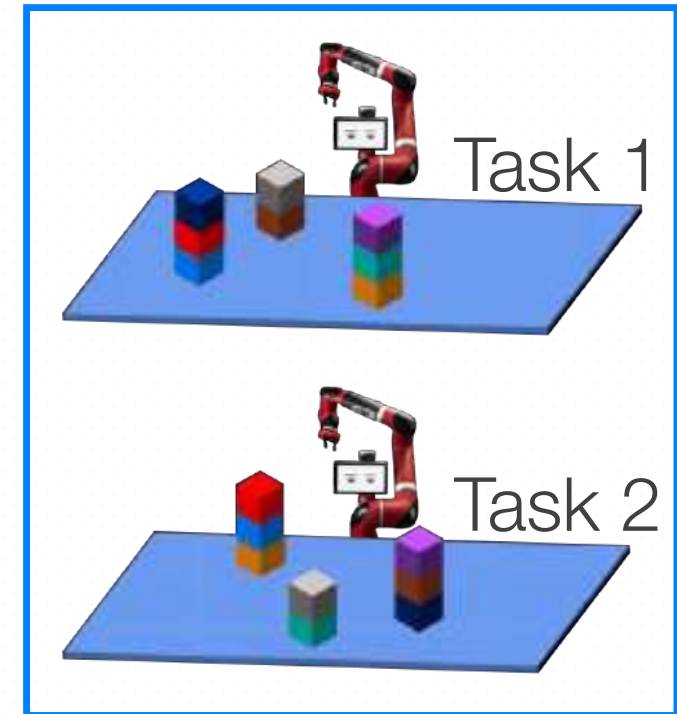
Block Stacking (...): Program 1

Block Stacking (...): Program 2

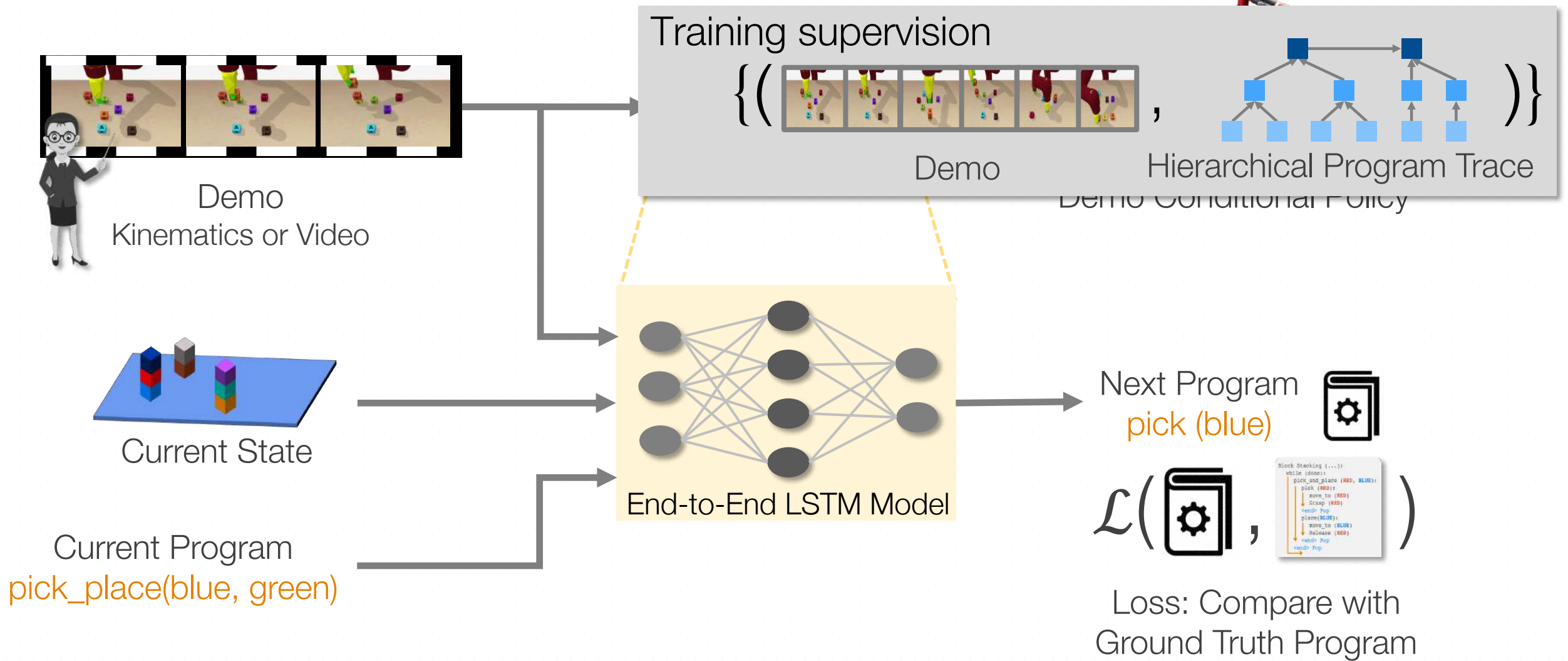
```
while (done):  
  pick_and_place (RED, BLUE):  
    pick (RED):  
      move_to (RED)  
      Grasp (RED)  
      <end> Pop  
    place (BLUE):  
      move_to (BLUE)  
      Release (RED)  
      <end> Pop  
  <end> Pop
```



Training Task Structures



# Neural Task Programming (NTP)



Hierarchical Policy Learning as Program Induction



Move\_to (Blue)



Grasp (Blue)



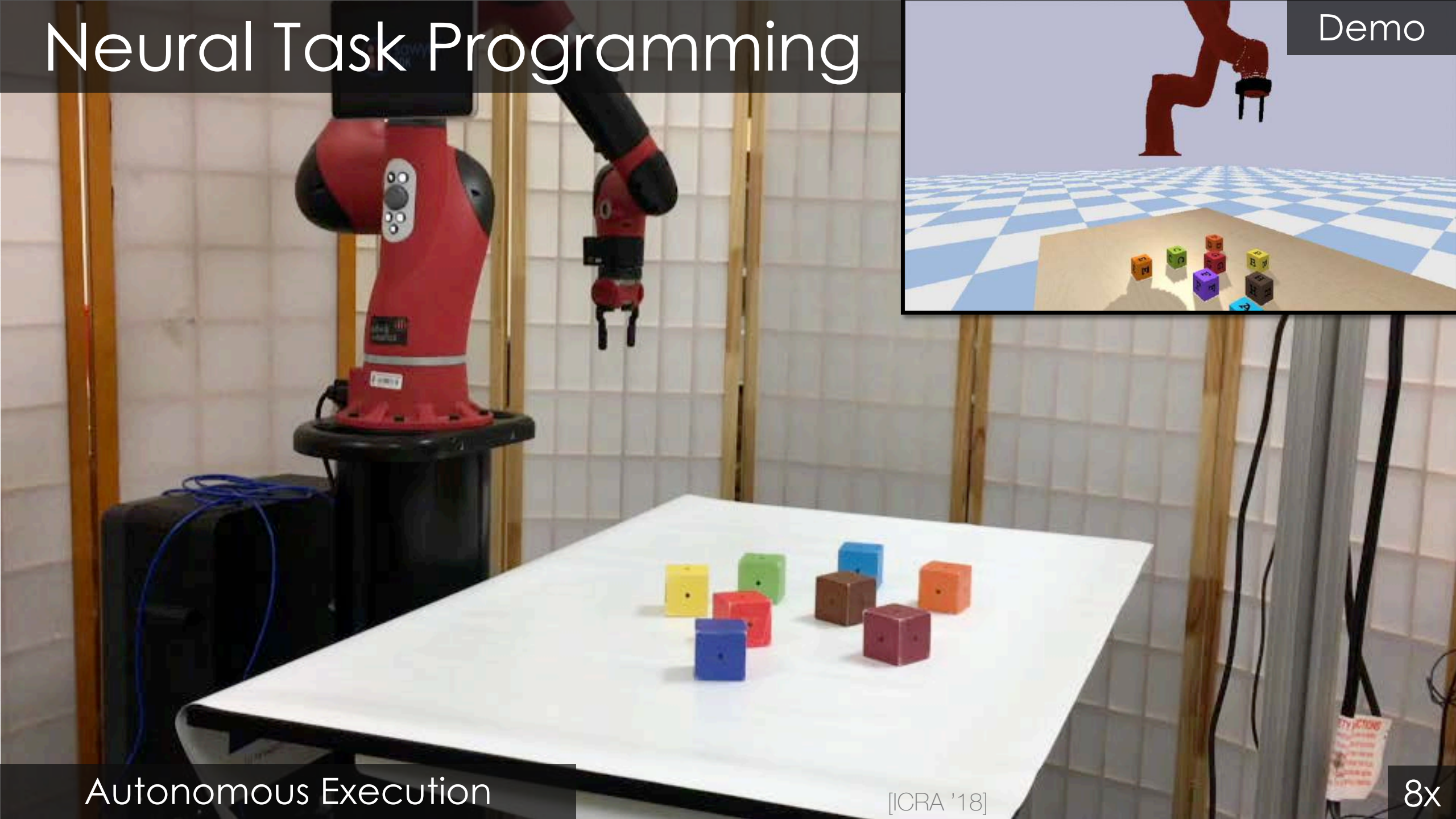
Move\_to (Red)



Release ( )

# Neural Task Programming

Demo



Autonomous Execution

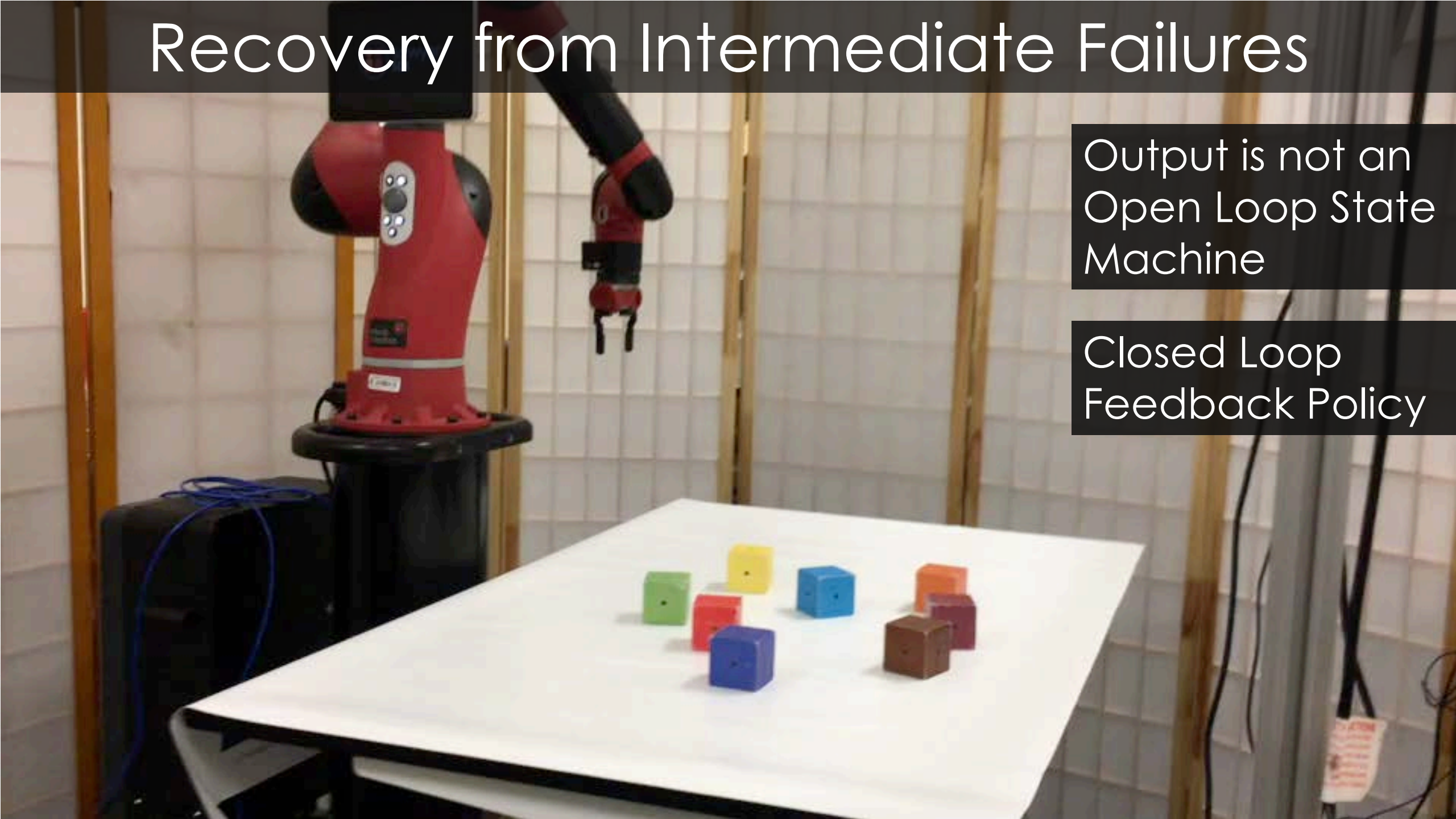
[ICRA '18]

8x

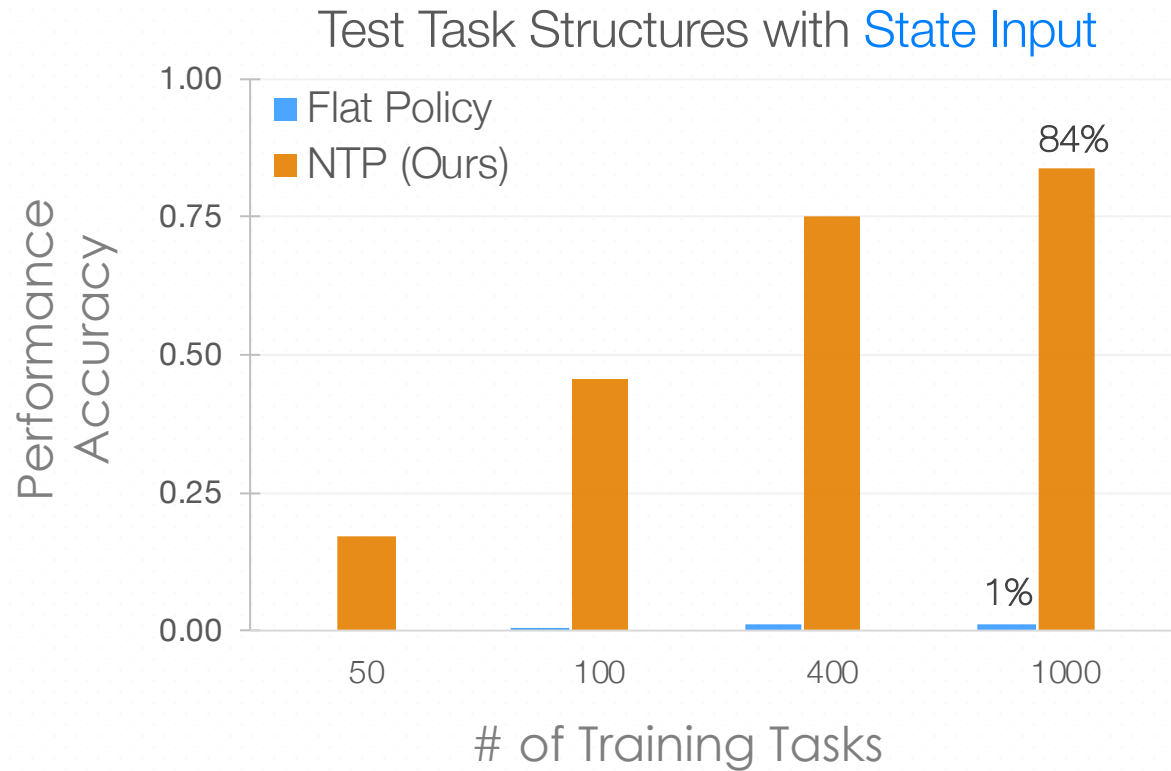
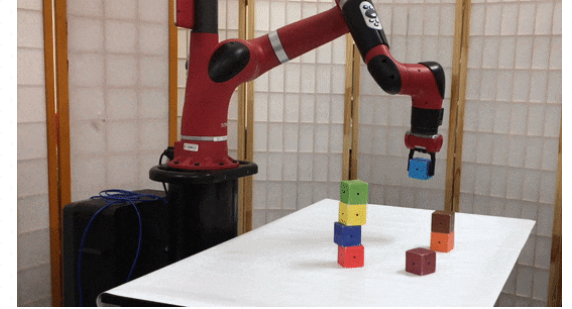
# Recovery from Intermediate Failures

Output is not an  
Open Loop State  
Machine

Closed Loop  
Feedback Policy



# Neural Task Programming Results



Pose Est. + Plan  
E2E Plan

Better Generalization than Flat Policy + Works with Vision

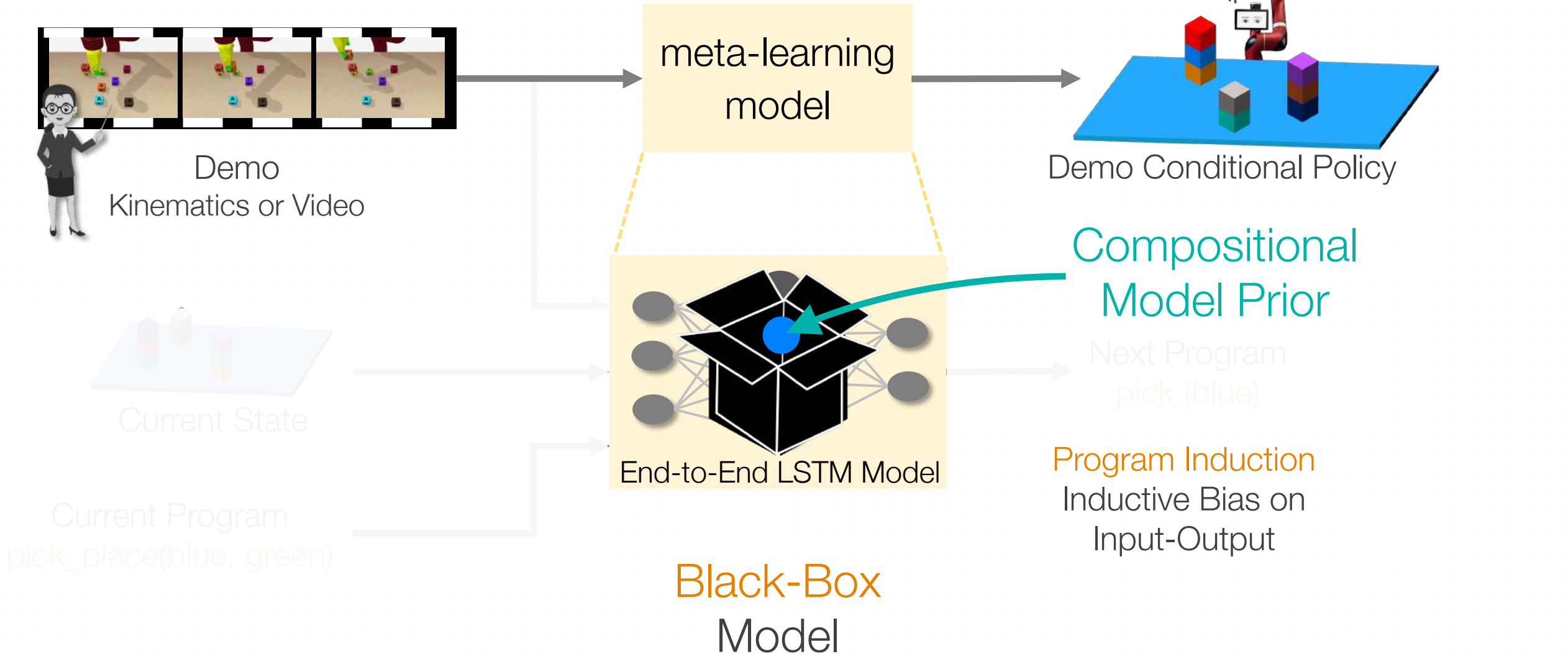
# Failure Modes



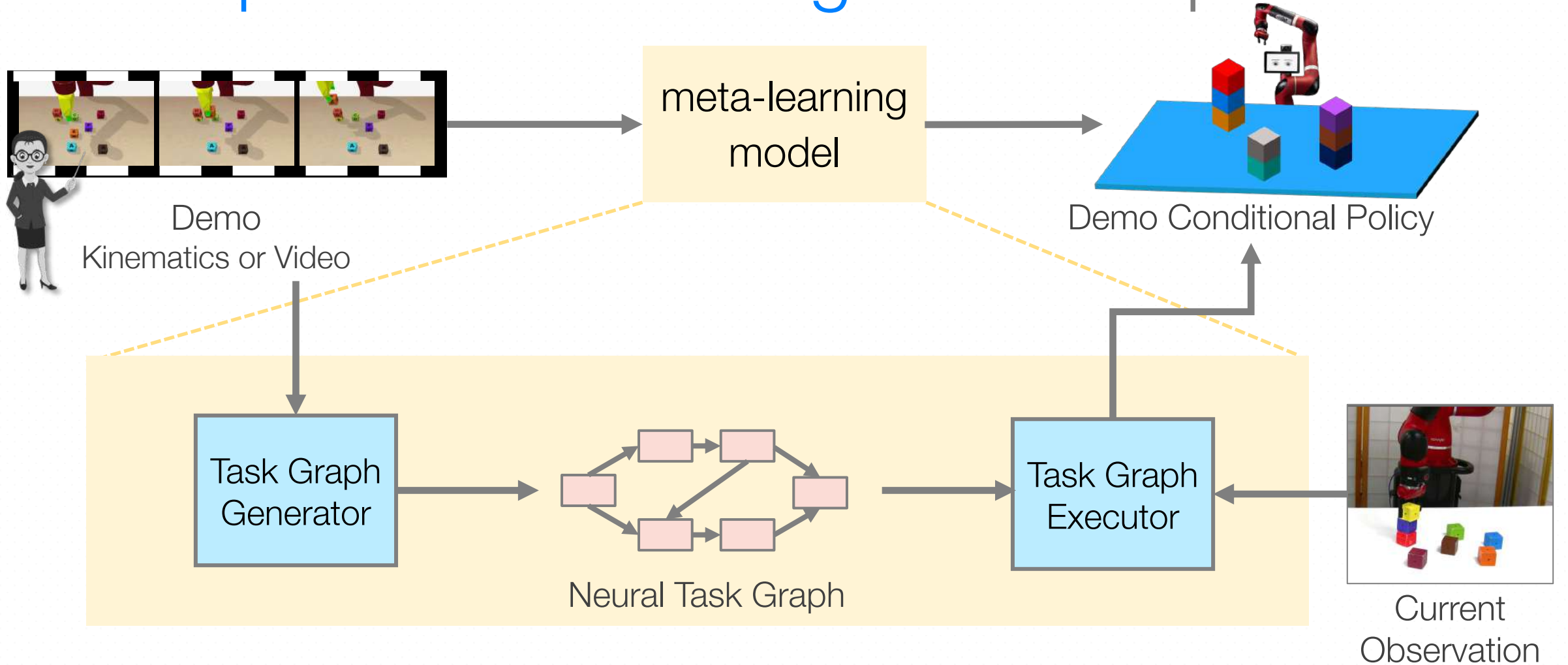
Grasping Failures

2x

# Compositional Planning: Task Programming

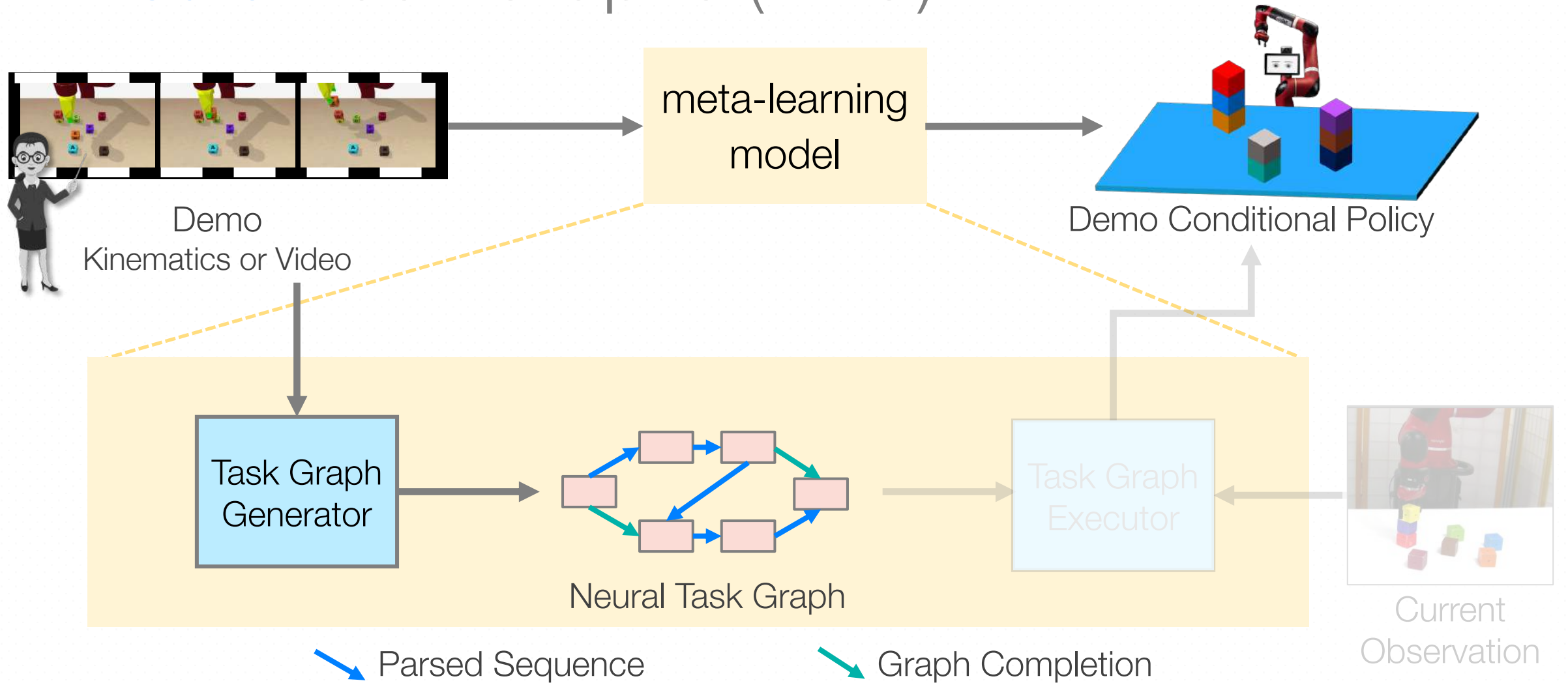


# Compositional Planning: Task Graphs



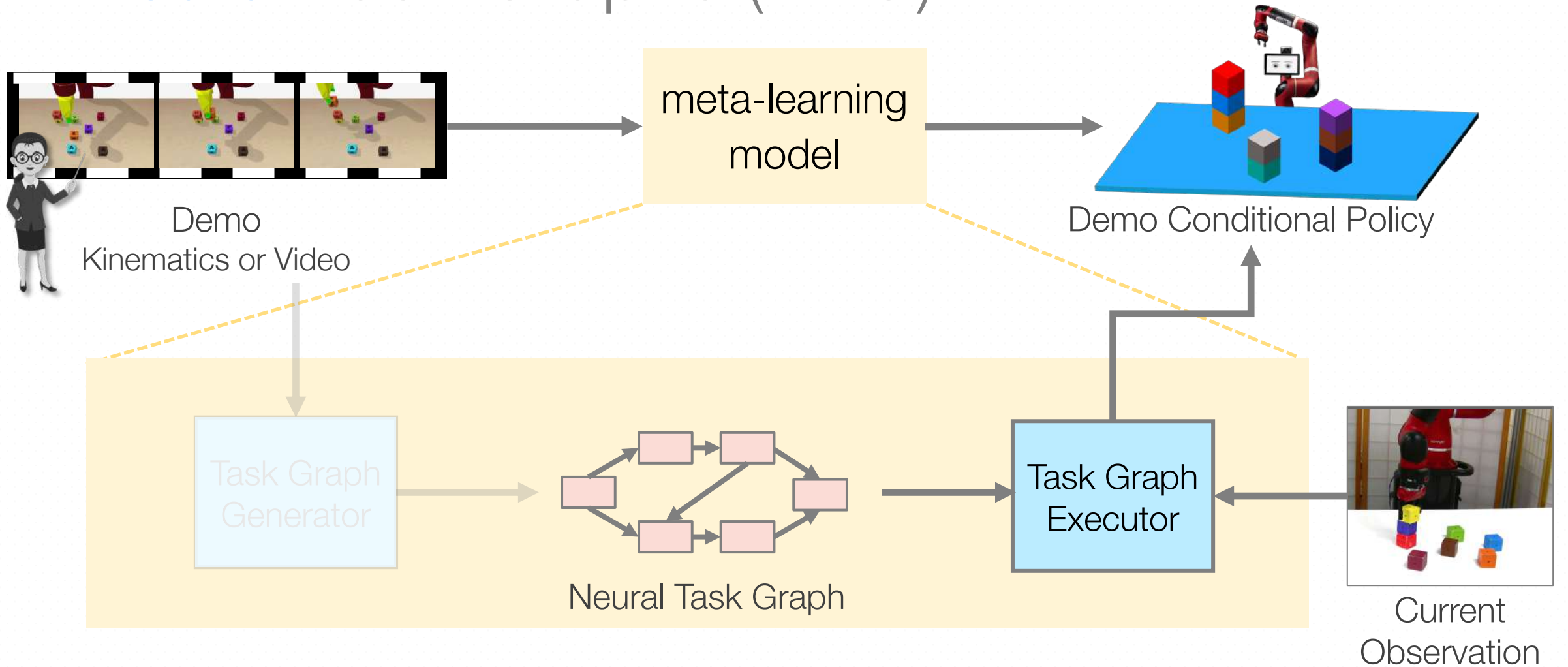
Hierarchical Policy Learning as **Graph Induction**

# Neural Task Graphs (NTG)



Hierarchical Policy Learning as **Graph Induction**

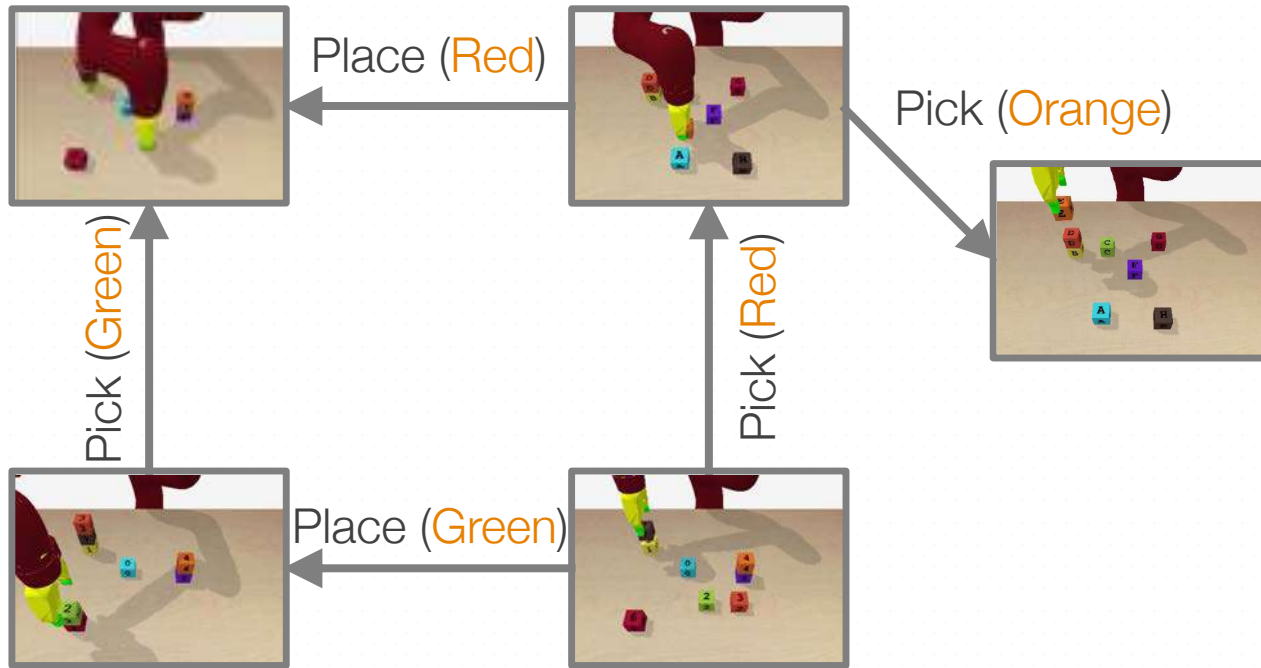
# Neural Task Graphs (NTG)



Hierarchical Policy Learning as **Graph Induction**

# Neural Task Graphs (NTG): Representation

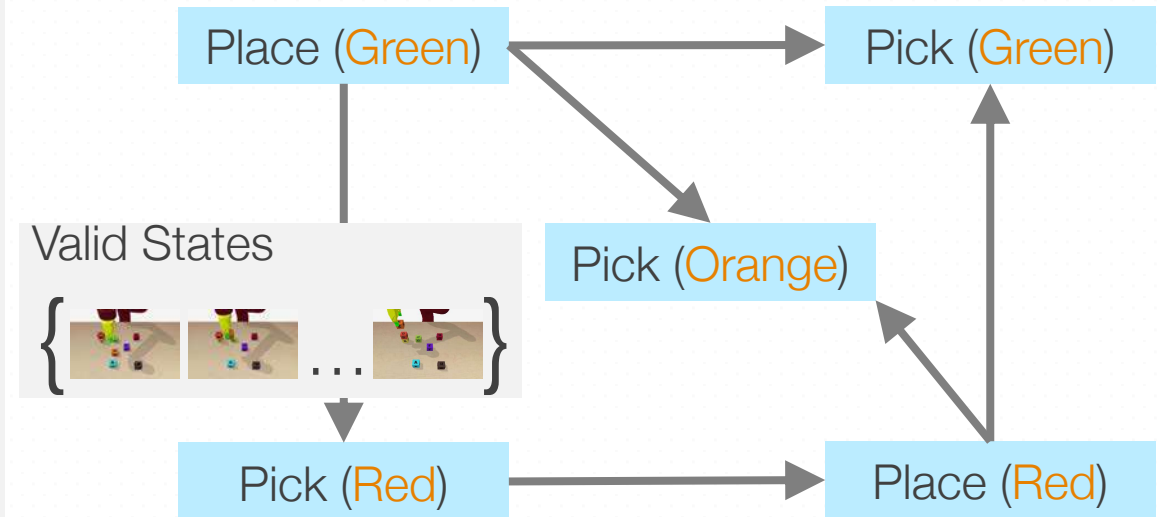
Task Graph



Nodes: States **Combinatorial**

Edges: Action

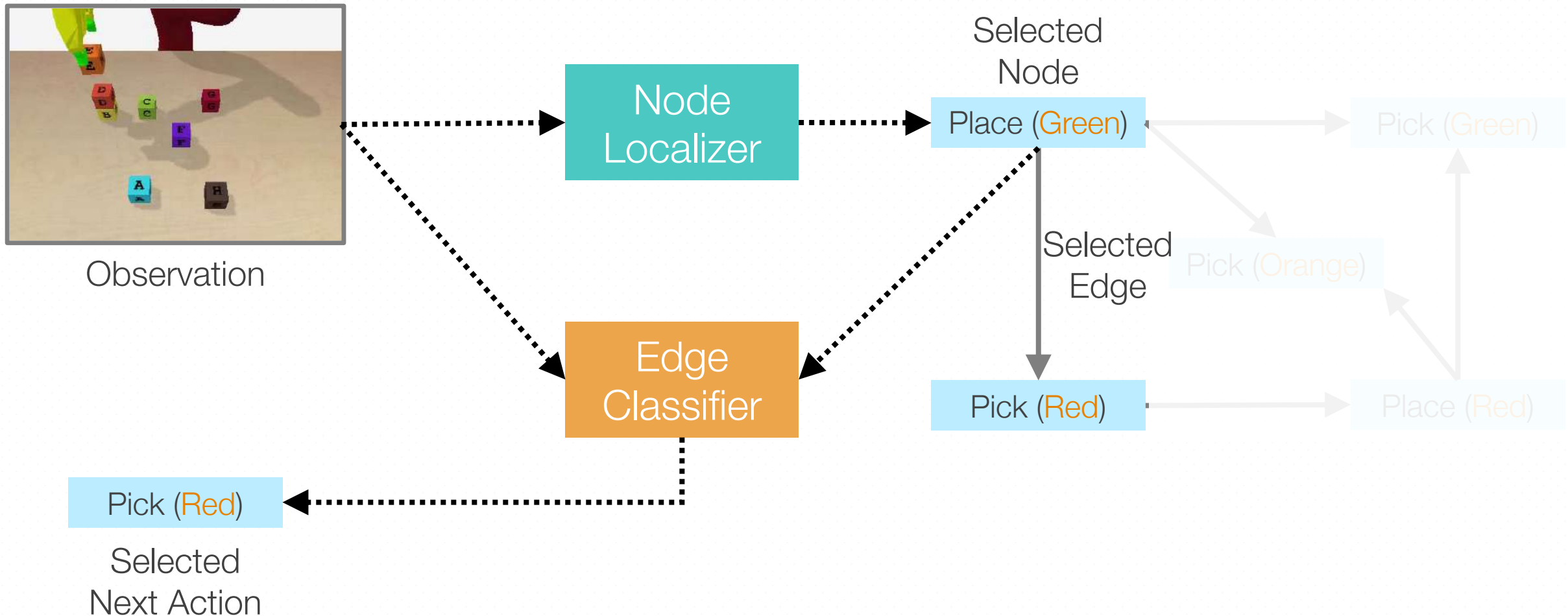
Conjugate Task Graph



Nodes: Actions **Finite**

Edges: States (Preconditions)

# Neural Task Graphs (NTG): Execution

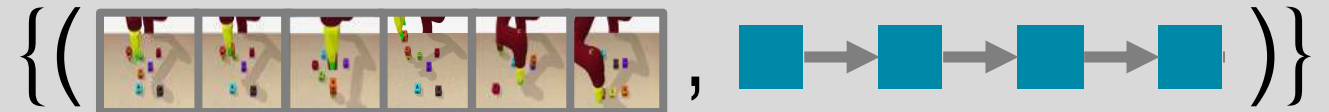


# Neural Task Graphs (NTG)



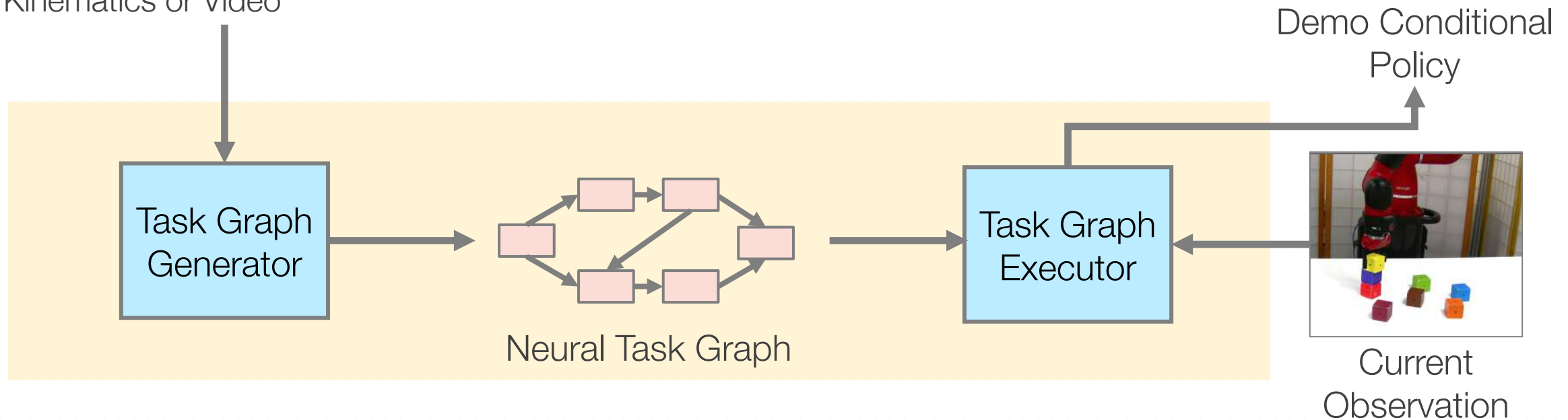
Demo  
Kinematics or Video

Training supervision



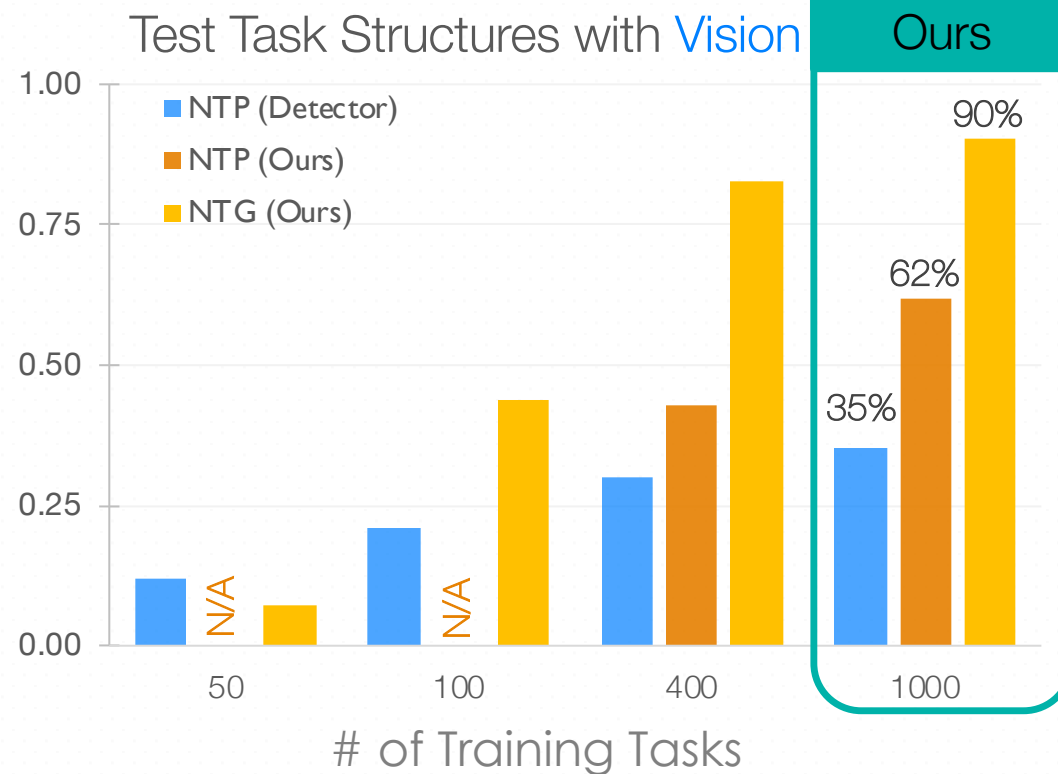
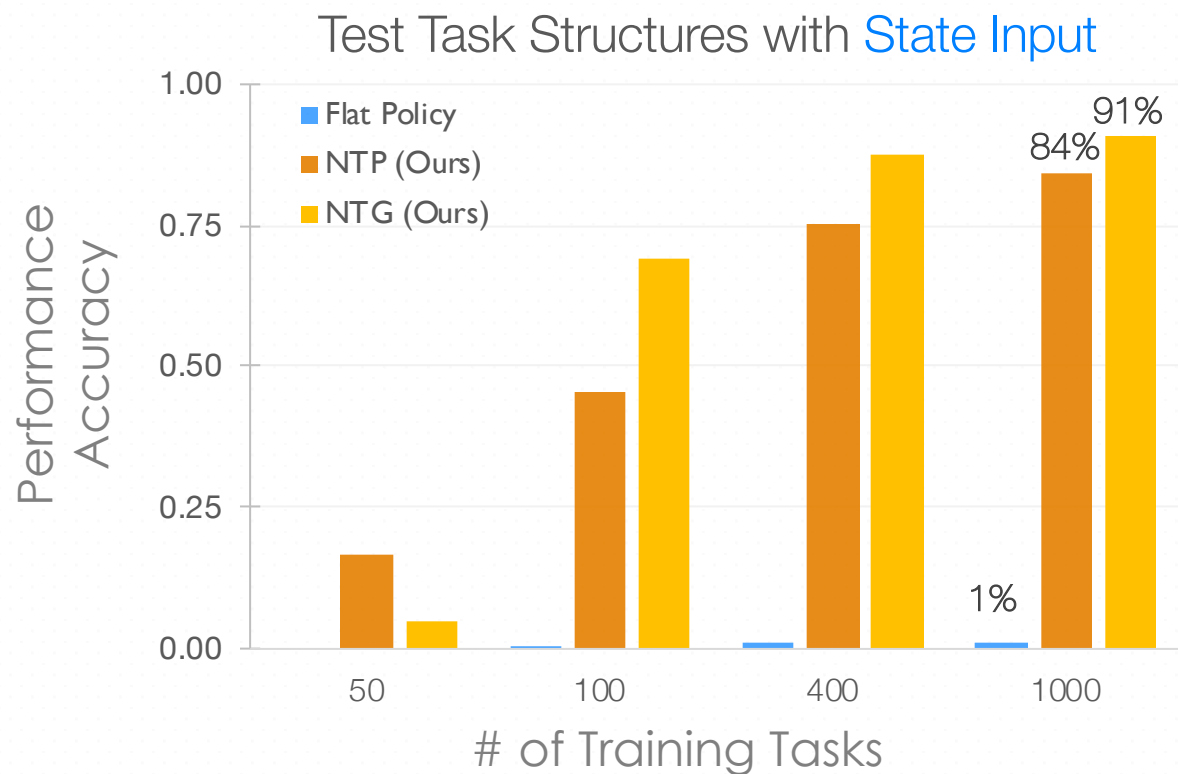
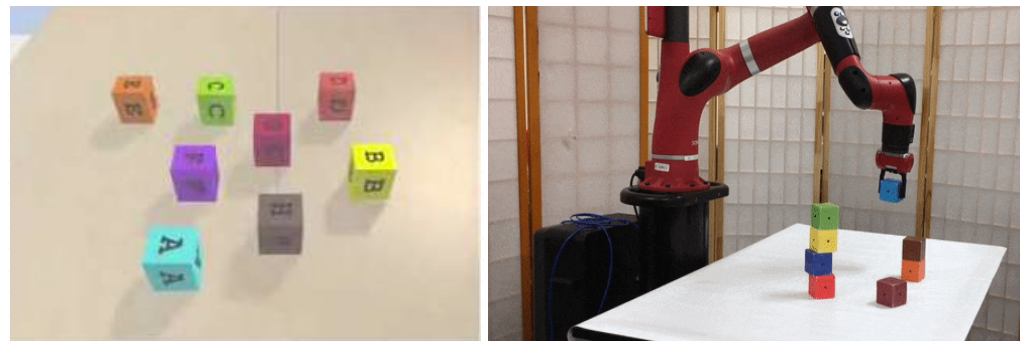
Demo

Action Sequence



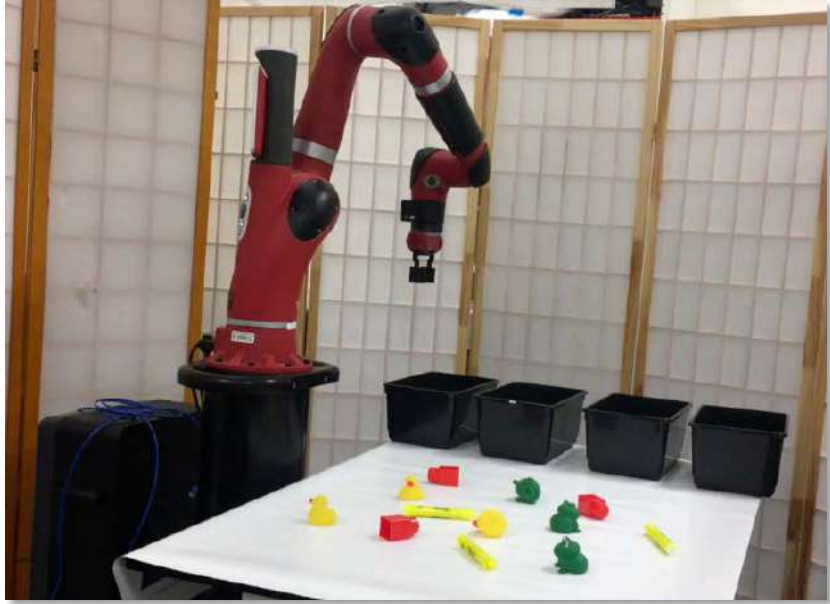
Hierarchical Policy Learning as **Graph Induction**

# Neural Task Graph Results



Weaker Supervision and Better Generalization

# Compositional Planning: NTP and NTG



Object Sorting  
(NTP)

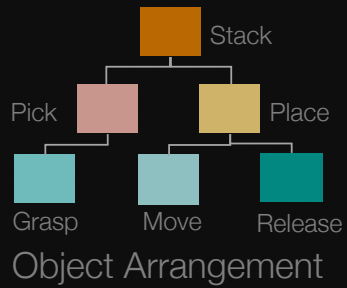


Table Clean Up  
(NTP)



Sequential Search and Prediction  
AI2 Thor with NTG

# Task Structure Learning



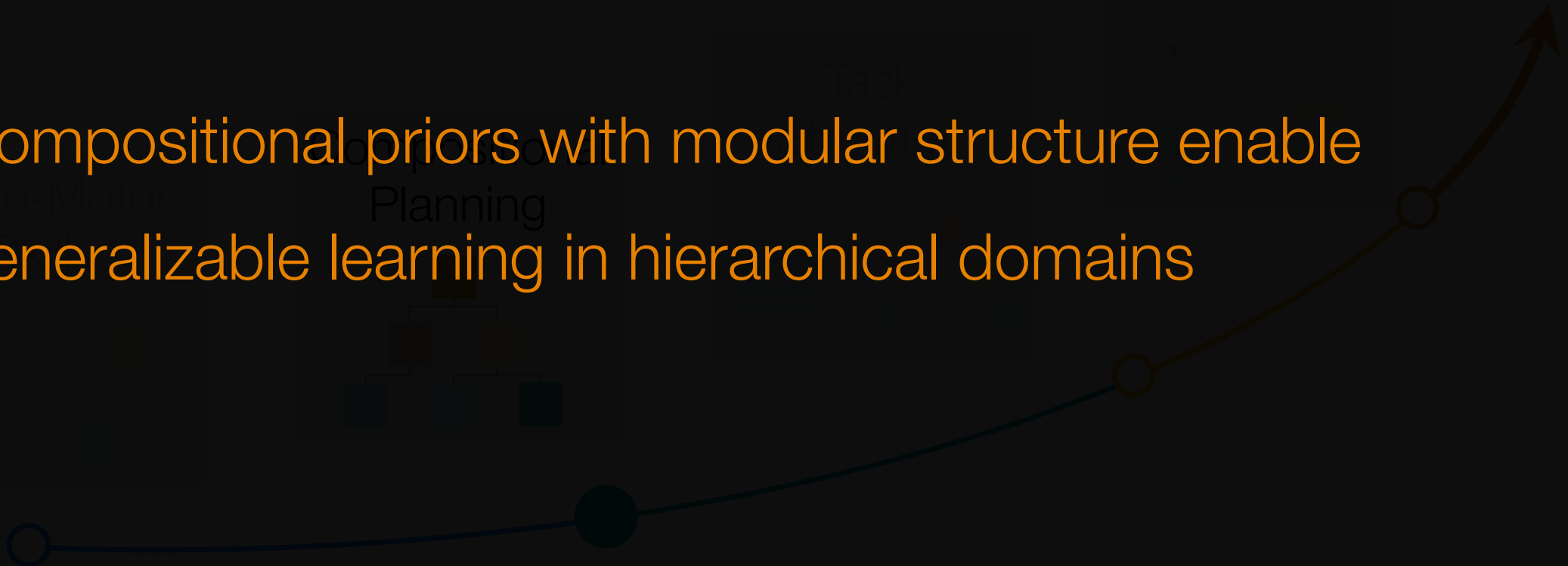
ICRA 2018



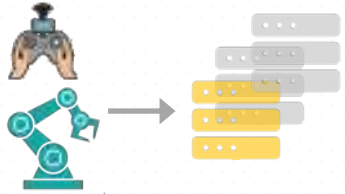
CVPR 2019 (oral)



Compositional priors with modular structure enable generalizable learning in hierarchical domains



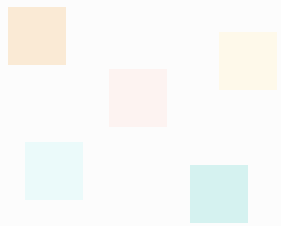
# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



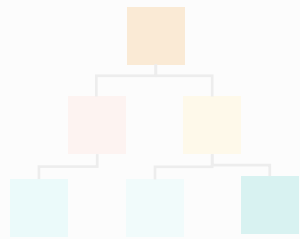
CoRL 2018, IROS 2019



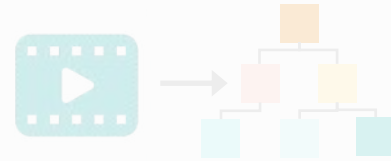
Visuo-Motor Skills



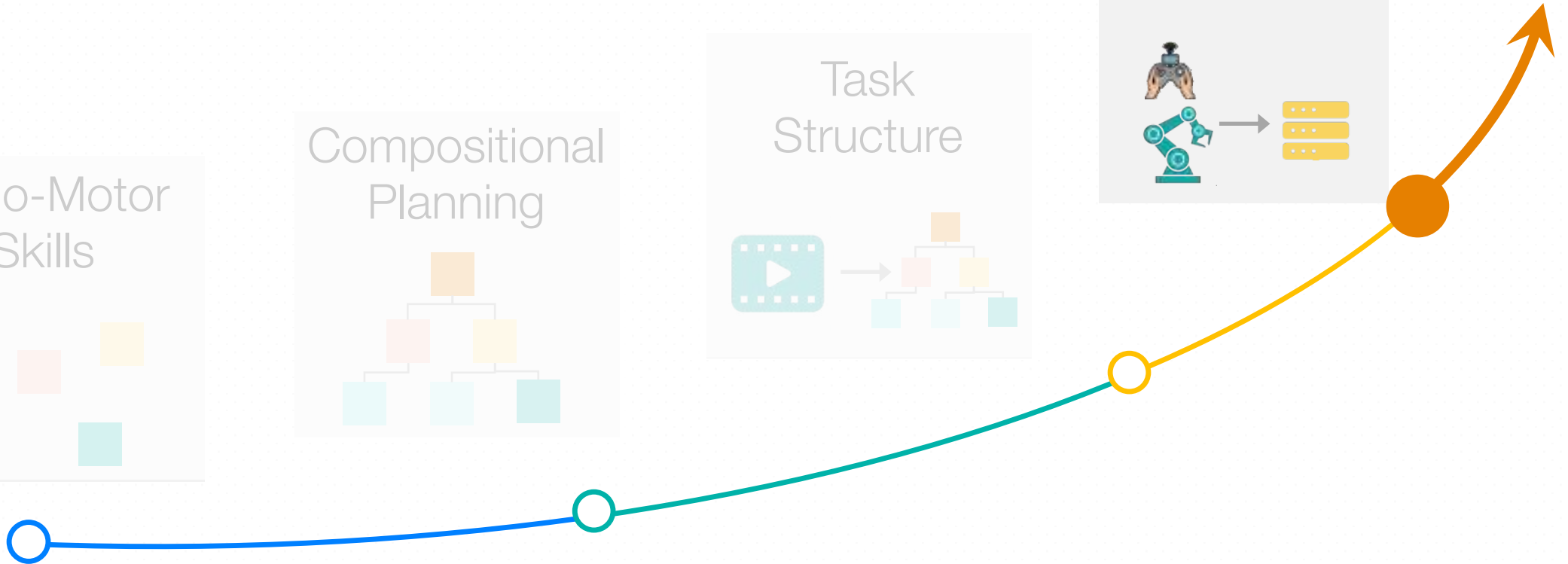
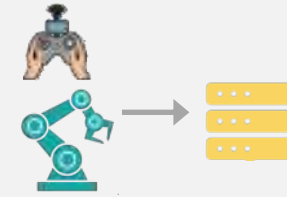
Compositional Planning



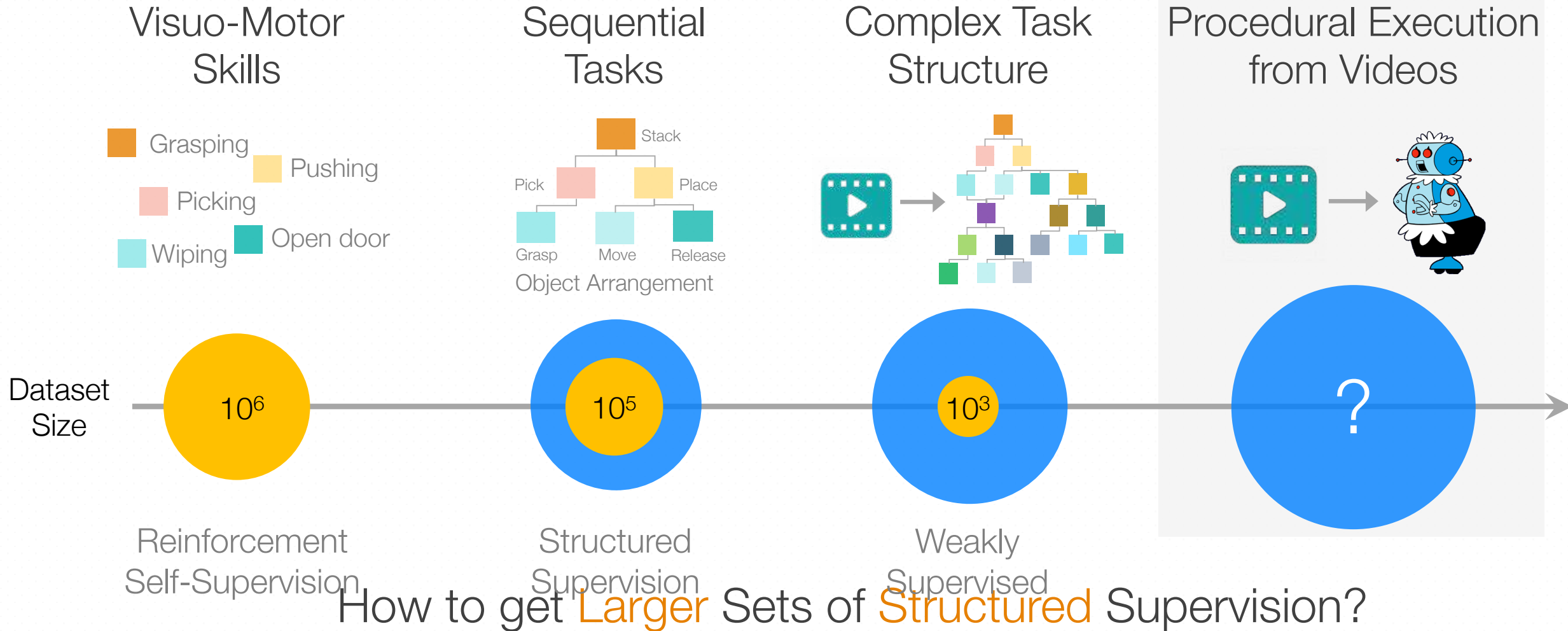
Task Structure



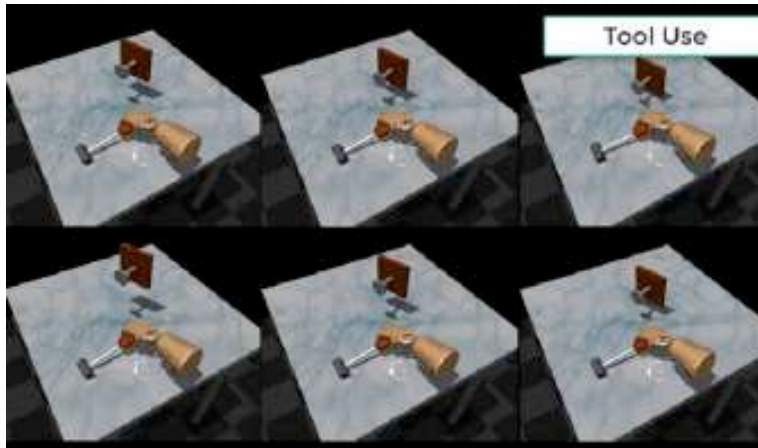
Data for Robotics



# Data for Robotics



# Data for Robotics: Imitation + RL



Rajeswaran et al. (2018)

25 demonstrations  
~ 10 Minutes



Finn et al. (2017)

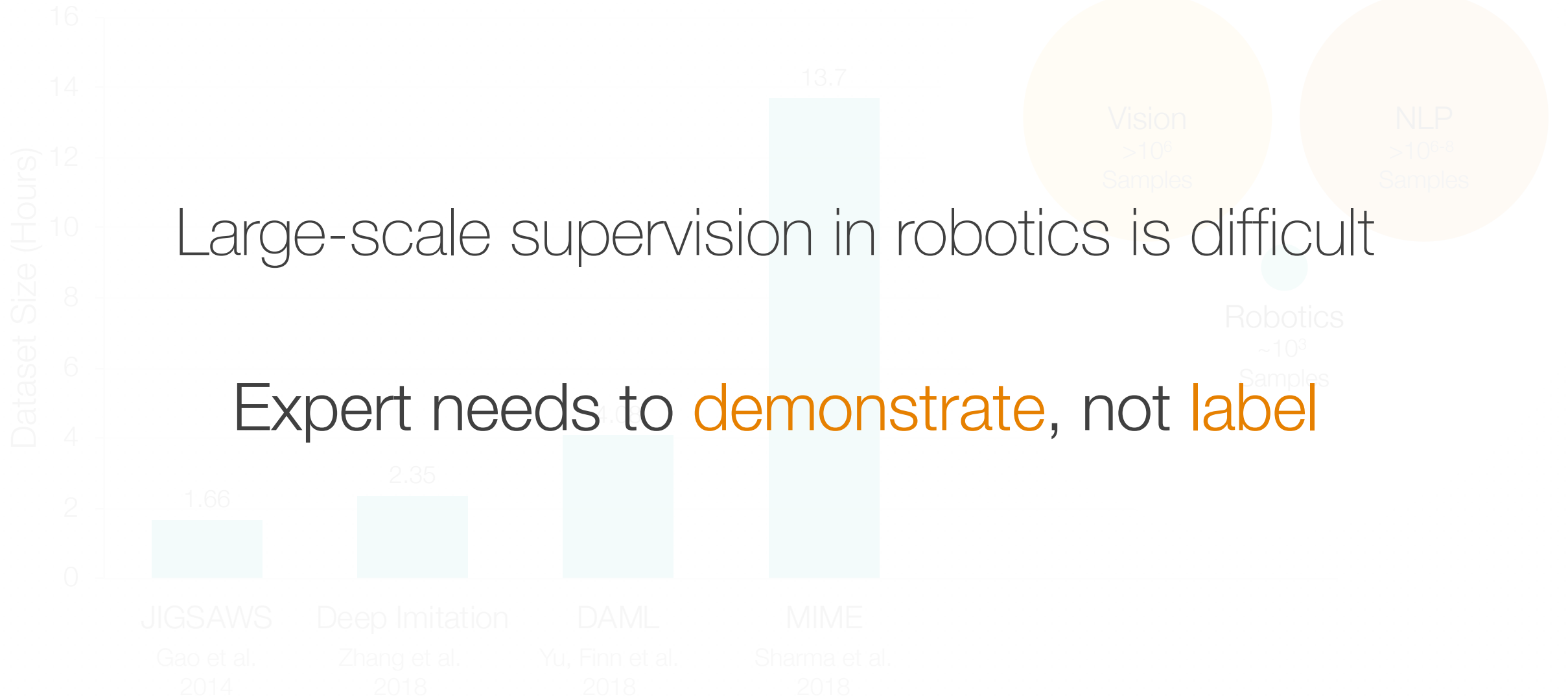
30 demonstrations  
~ 10 Minutes



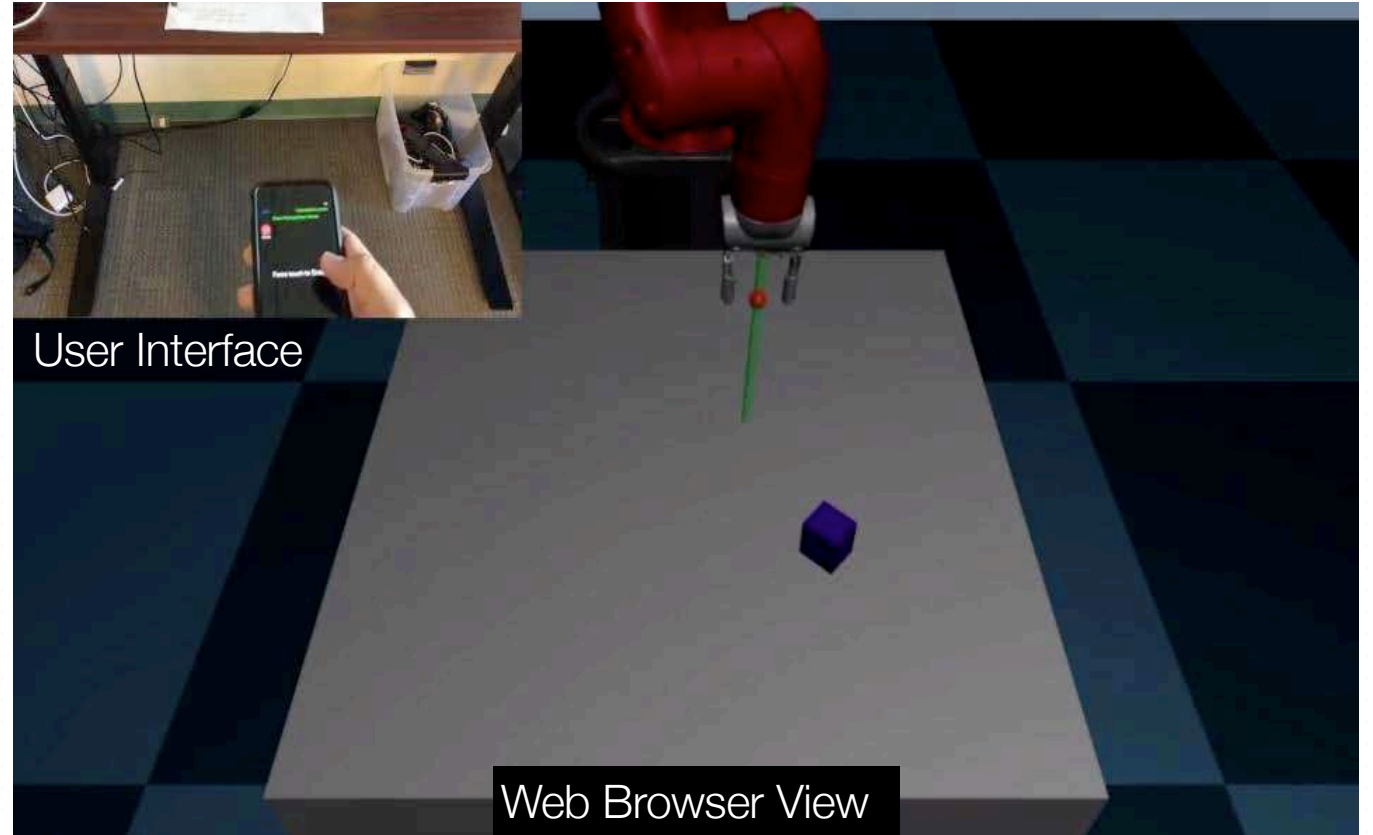
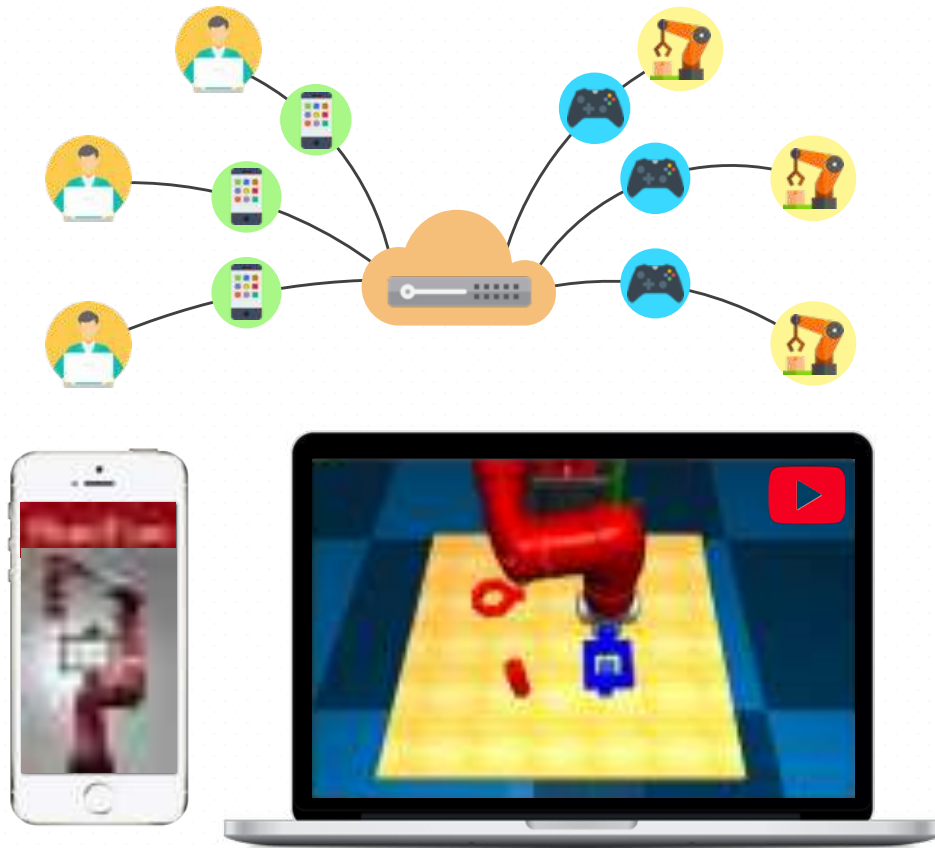
Vecerik et al. (2017)

100 demonstrations  
~ 30 Minutes

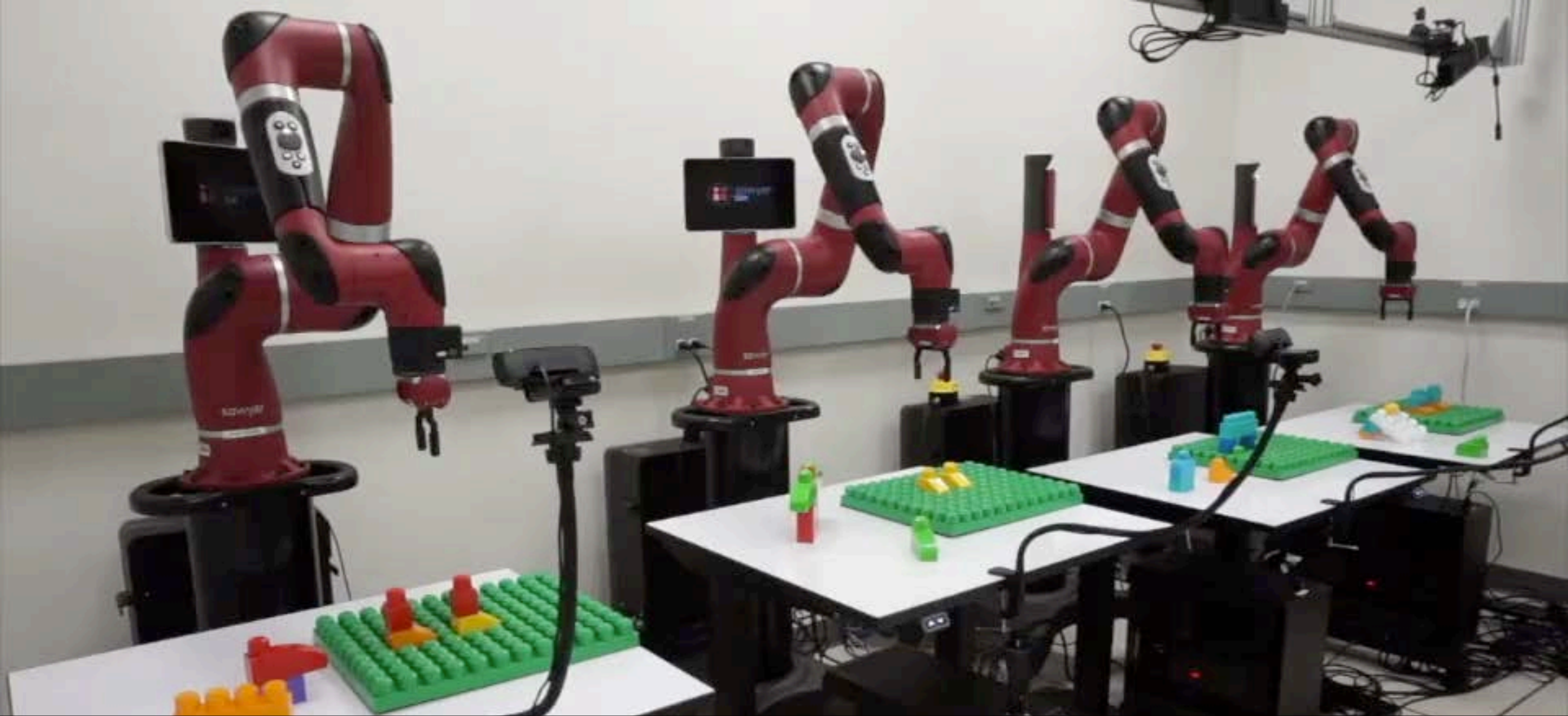
# Data for Robotics



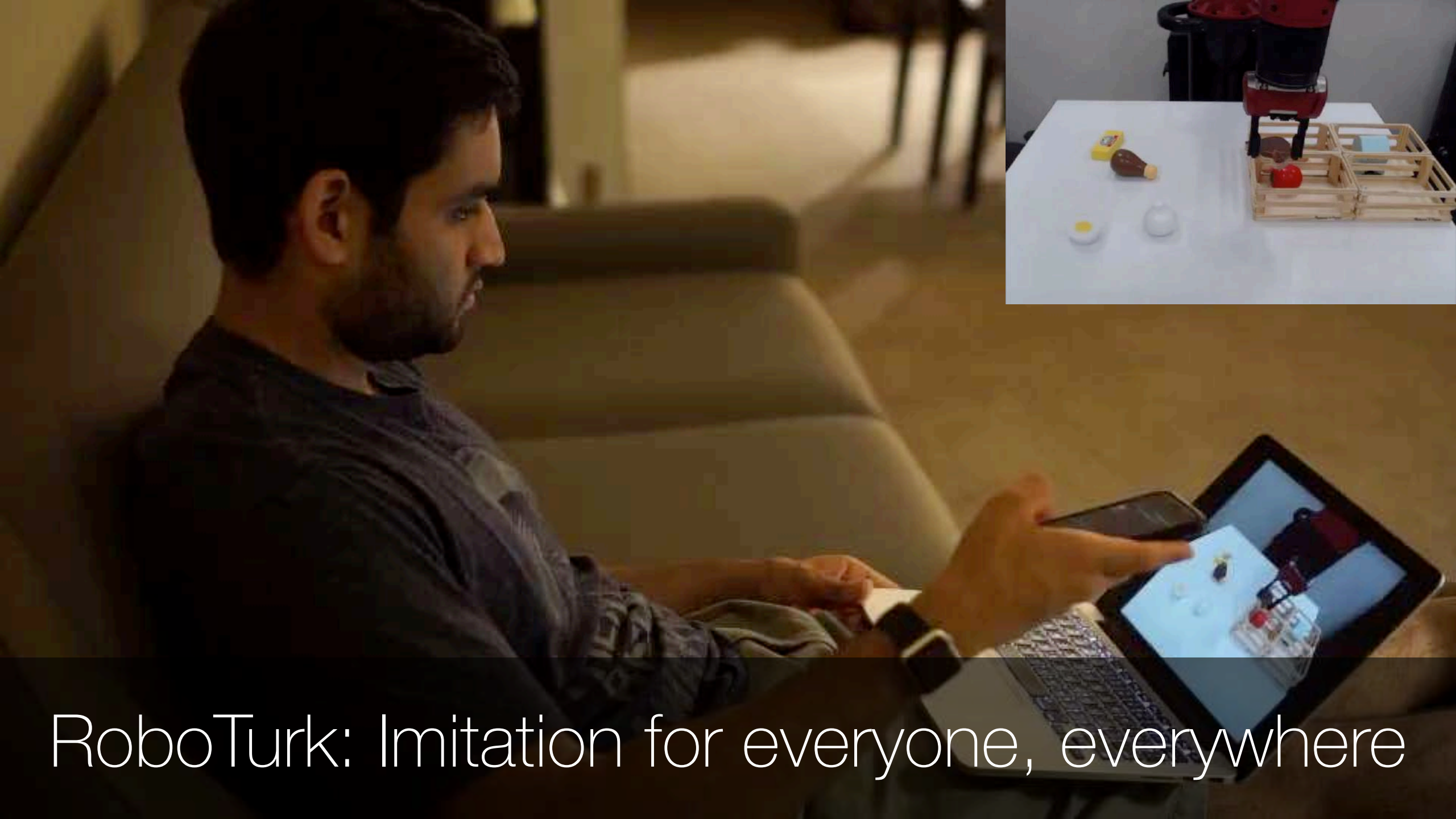
# Data for Robotics: RoboTurk



- + Scales easily with commodity hardware
- + Natural 6-DoF Free Space Control



RoboTurk: Scaling Imitation with Cloud



RoboTurk: Imitation for everyone, everywhere

# RoboTurk Pilot Datasets

## Simulated Data

137.5 hours of demonstrations

22 hours of total platform usage

3 dexterous manipulation tasks

3224 total attempted demos

15 novice, remote users

## Real Robot Data

111 hours of robot demos

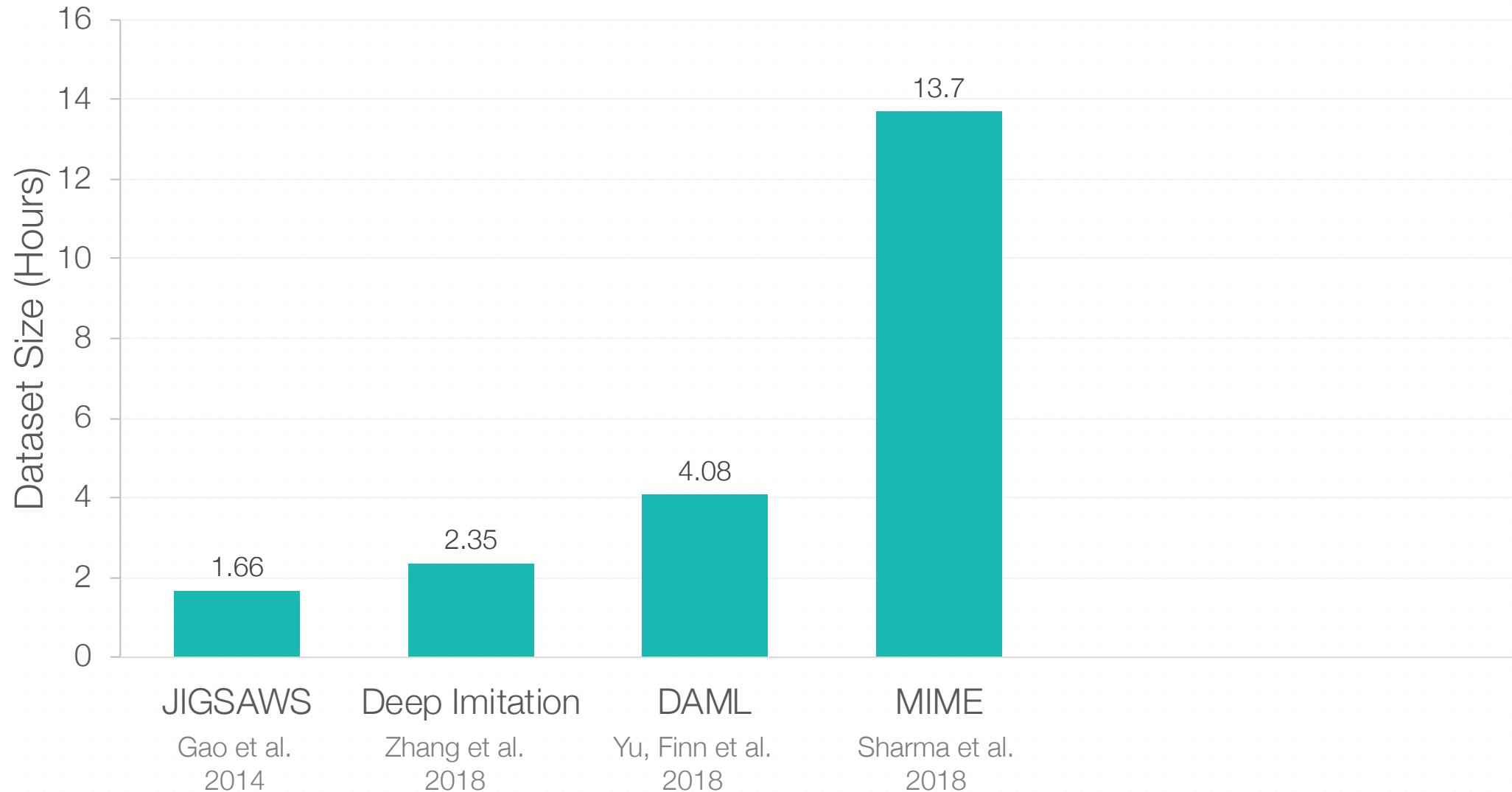
1 week of data collection

3 dexterous manipulation tasks

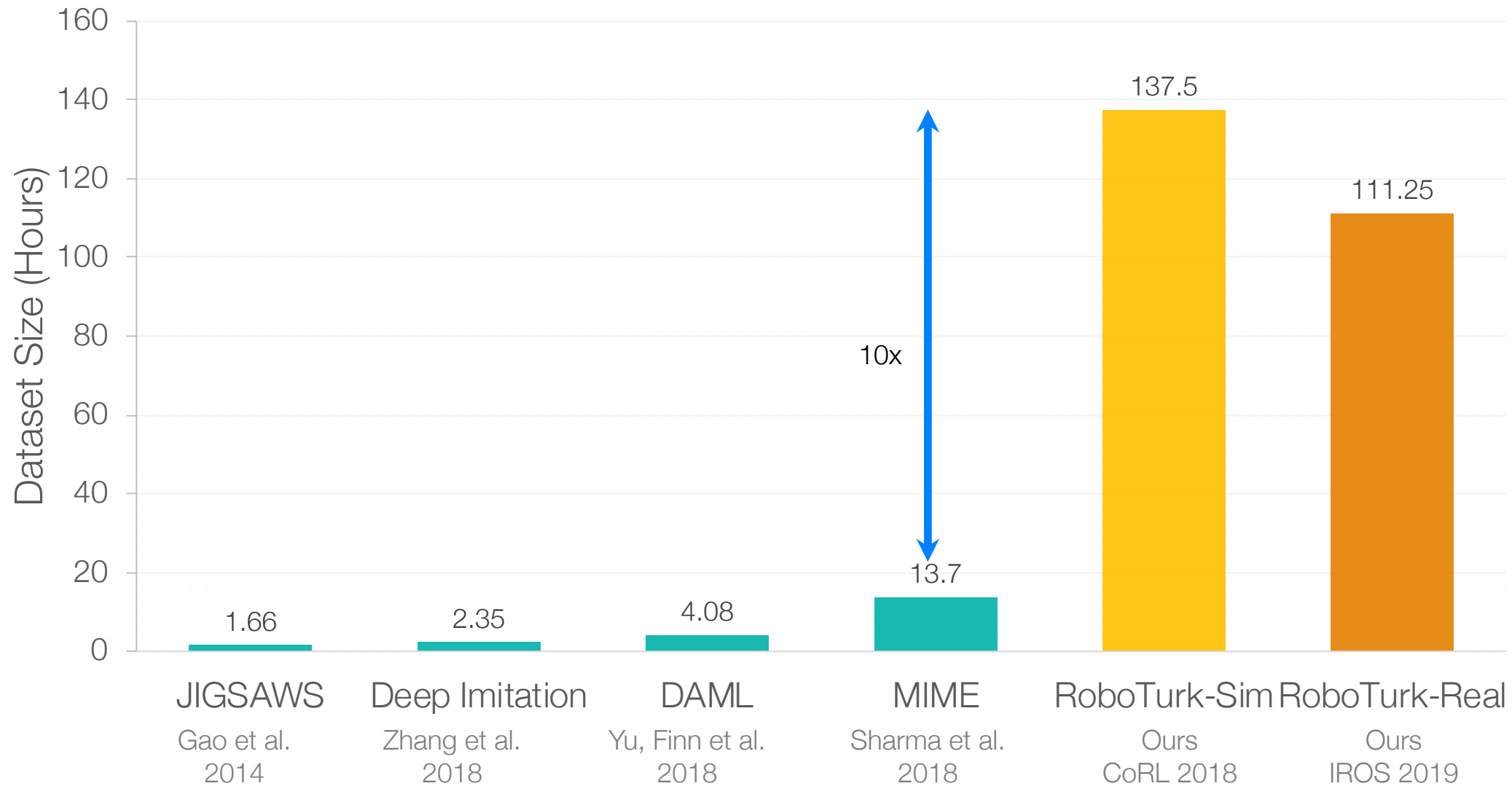
2144 total demonstrations

54 non-expert users

# Data for Robotics: RoboTurk



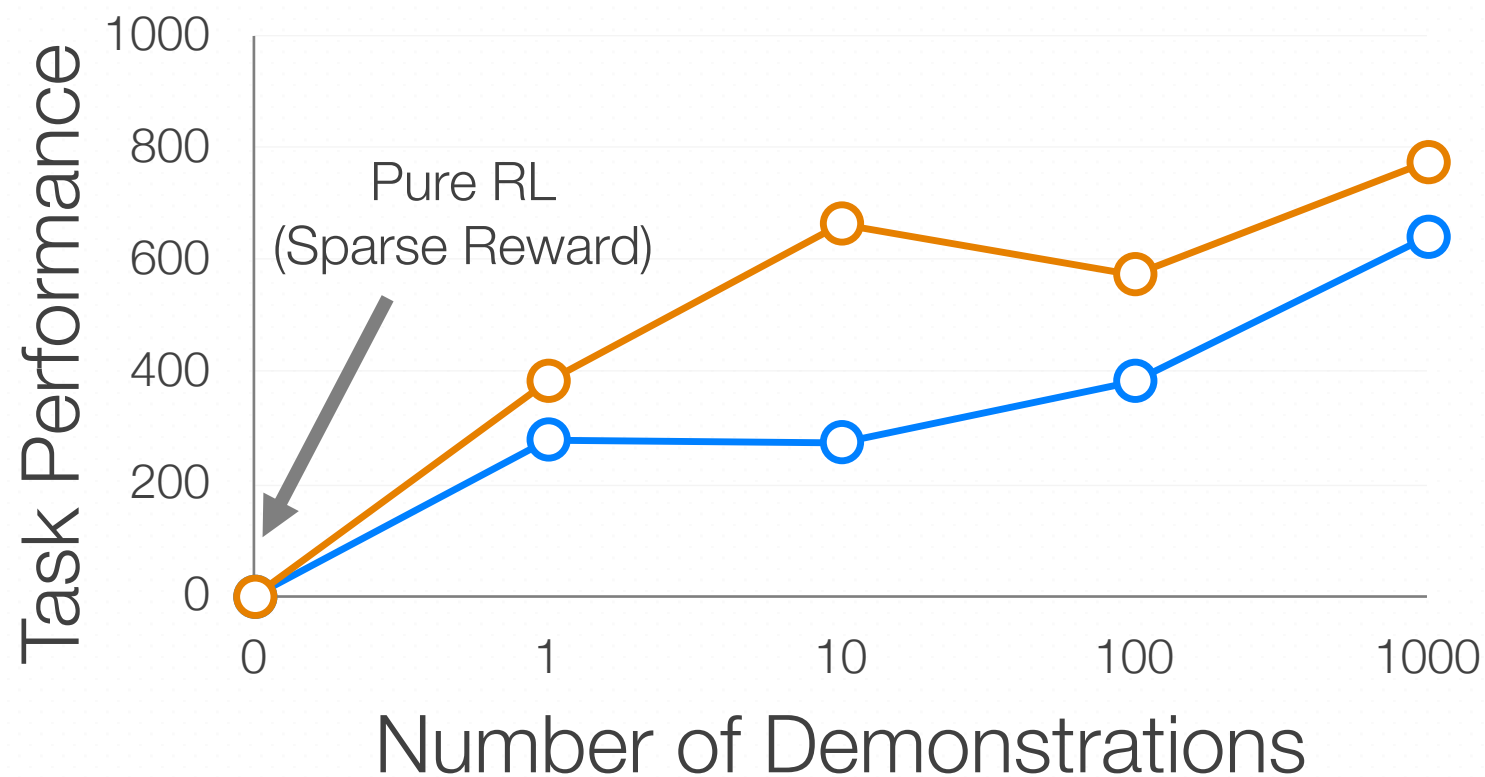
# Data for Robotics: RoboTurk



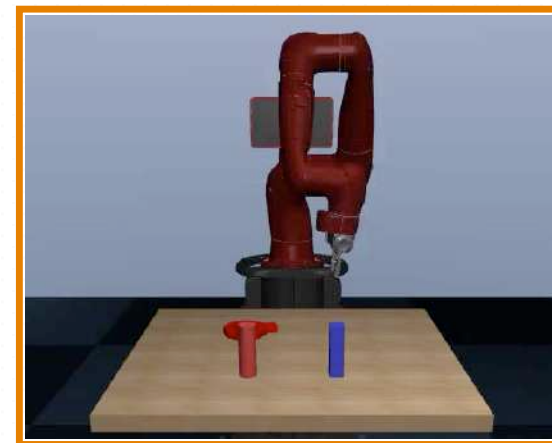
# Data for Robotics: RoboTurk

Imitation + RL

Task Performance vs. Number of Demonstrations



Trained Policy Rollout

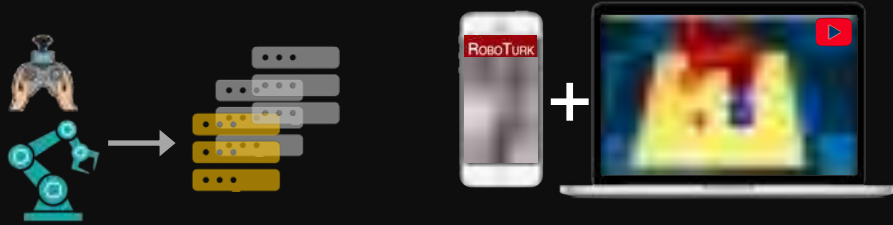


Nut Assembly



Bin Picking

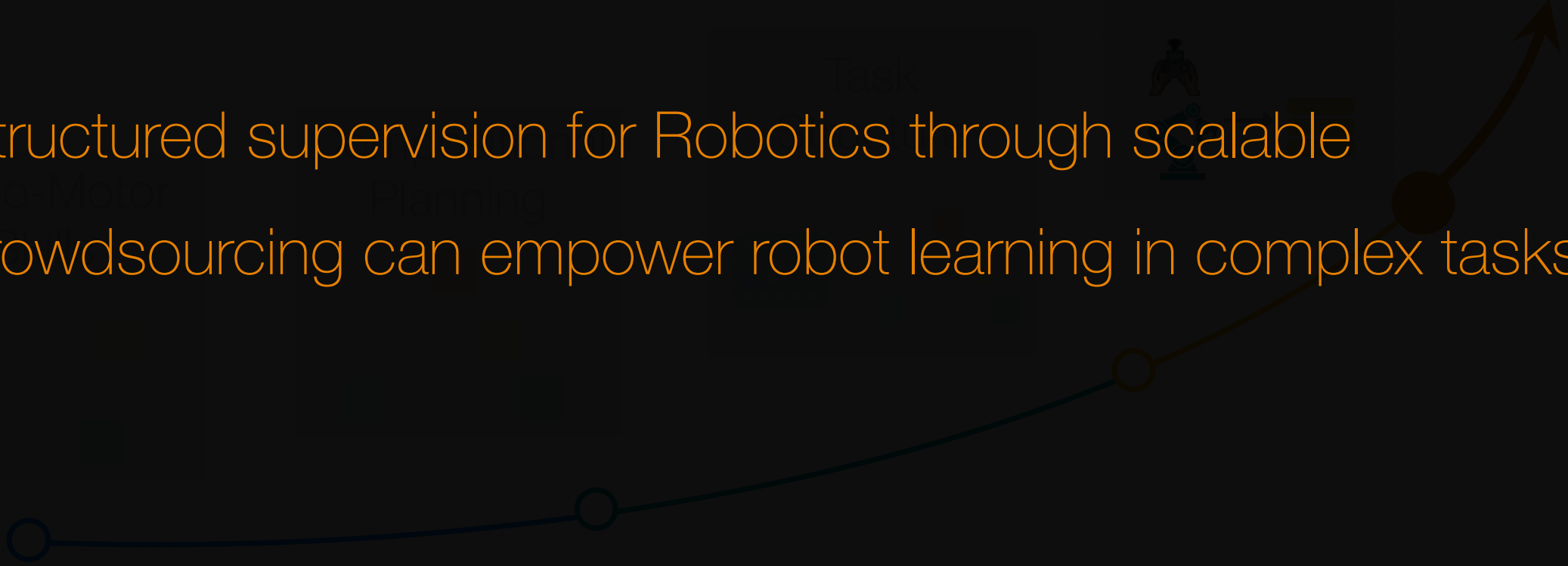
# Data for Robotics: RoboTurk



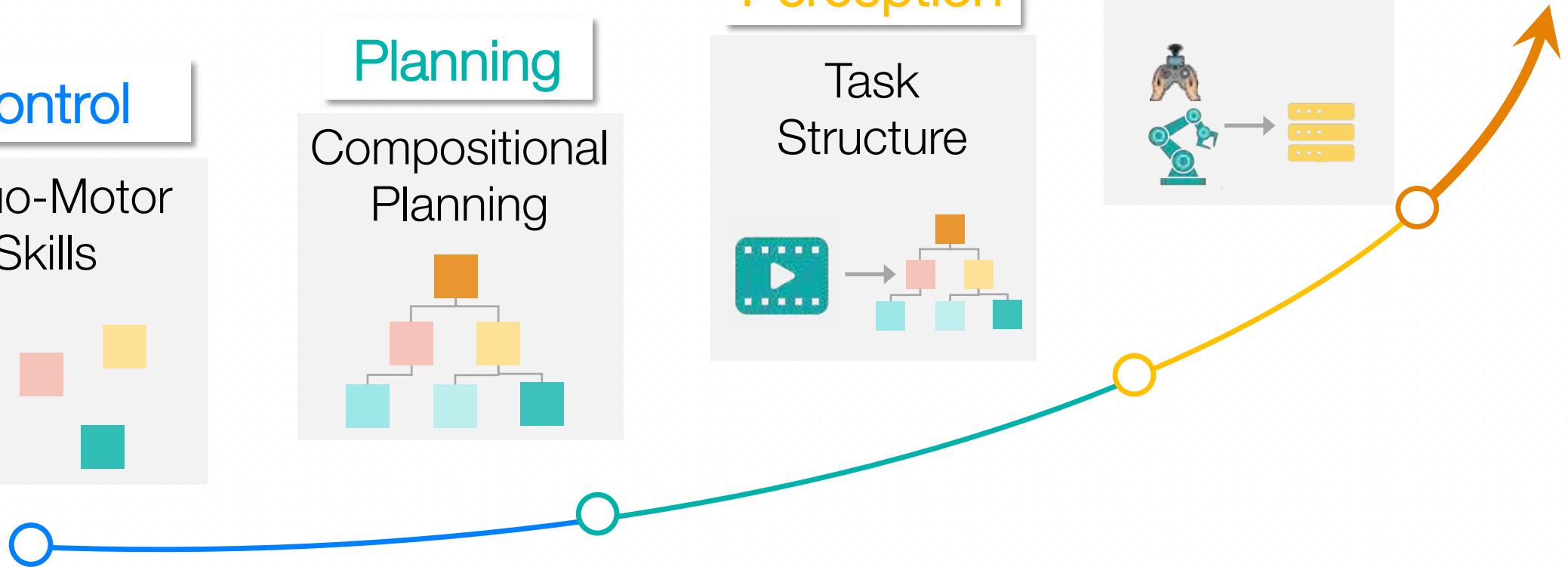
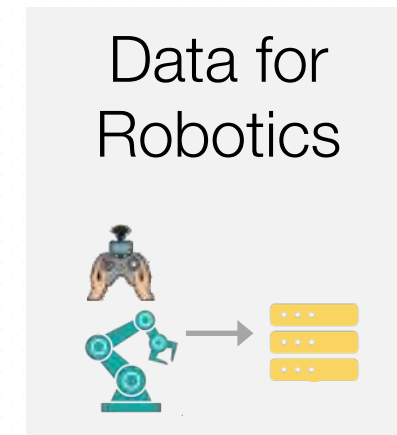
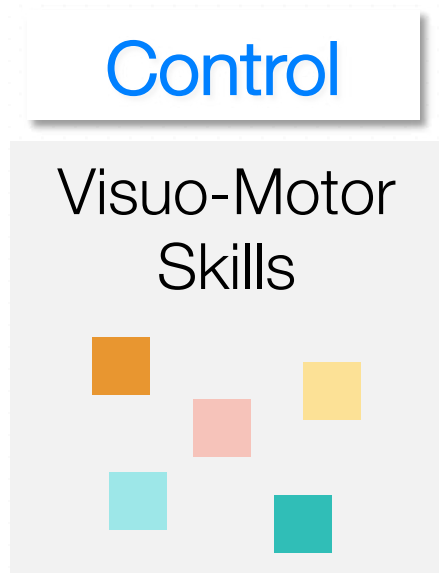
CoRL 2018, IROS 2019

Data for  
Robotics

Structured supervision for Robotics through scalable crowdsourcing can empower robot learning in complex tasks.



# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



# Opportunity: Personal Robotics



Instructional Youtube Video  
How to make Meatball Pasta?



Where / How should Rosie start?  
What is the recipe?  
How to execute the plan?  
How to plan?

# Reasoning for Physical Interaction

## Understanding Purpose



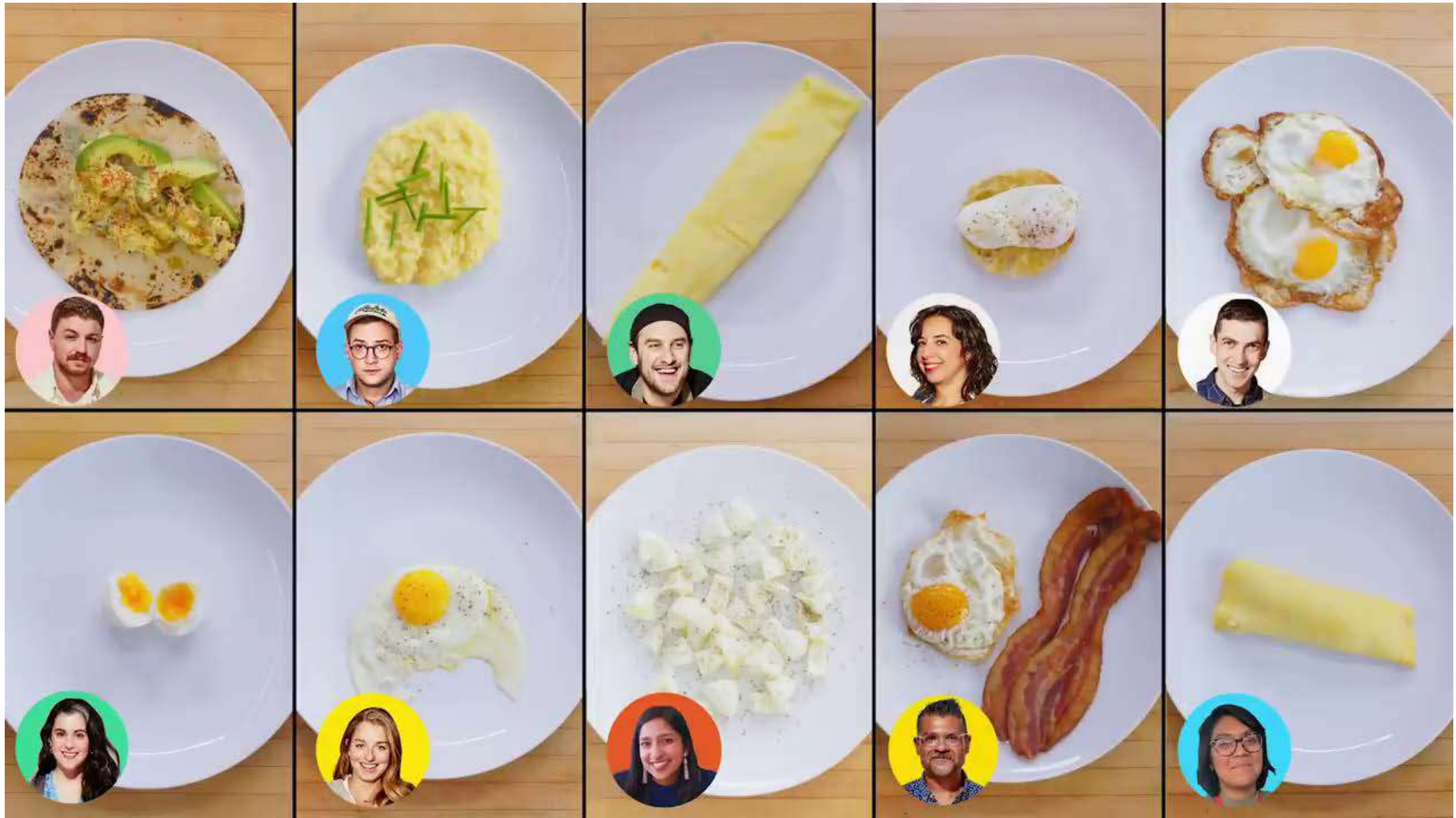
Ideal Tool  
During Training



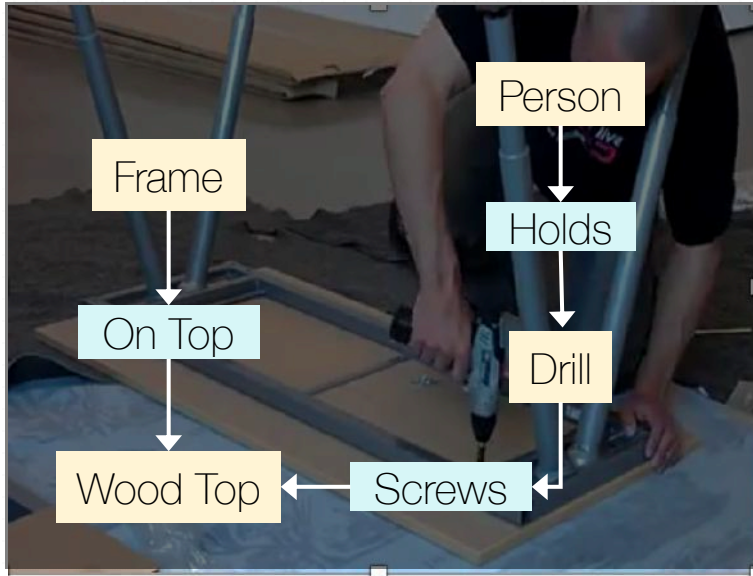
Task-Based Tool Adaptation  
During Execution



Grounding: So many ways to “make eggs”



# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



Higher-Order **Semantics**



What makes an **object** a **hammer**?



**State Change:** Breaking Eggs

- Perception for Physical Interaction
- Reasoning through Learned Dynamics
- Transfer Learning with Formal Guarantees
- Continual Skill Adaptation & Accumulation

# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation

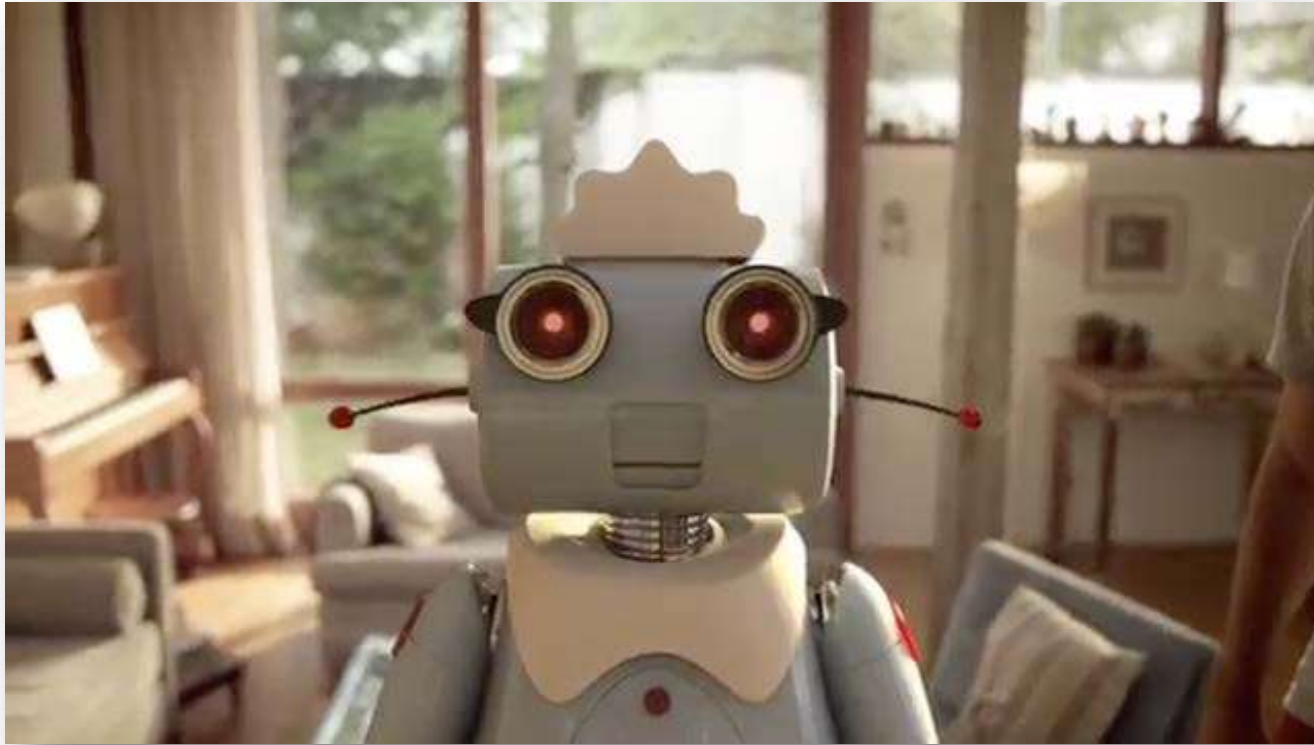


Learning with Structured Inductive Bias and Priors

- Efficiency and Generalization
- Combine: Domain Expertise + Data-Driven Methods



# Generalizable Autonomy in Robot Manipulation



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UNIVERSITY OF  
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