

Foundation Models for Decision Making

Problems, Methods, and Applications

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Google DeepMind

Machine Learning Advances in Vision and Language



Text to image / video

J1 What are Foundation Models?

 Foundation models are large pre-trained neural networks used in machine learning and natural language processing. They form the foundation for various tasks and are trained on extensive internet text data, enabling them to grasp a wide range of knowledge and language patterns. Prominent examples include OpenAI's GPT series and Google's BERT model.

Language generation

Behind These Advances: Foundation Models

Jl

What are Foundation Models?



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Response from GPT-4

Modeling the Data is Not Enough

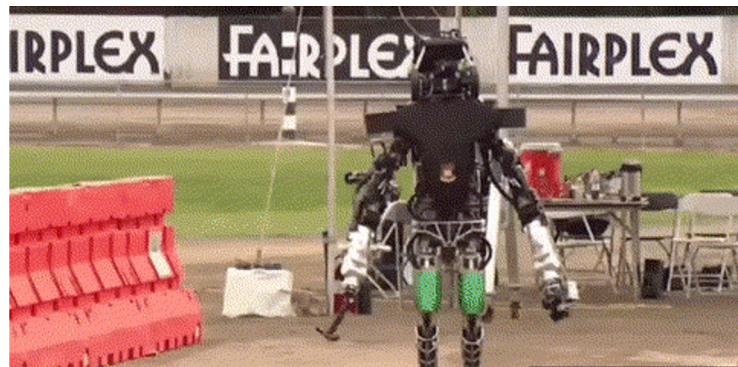
Issue: Not enough data

- Scientific discoveries
- Rare events, safety



Issue: Want better than data

- Failed robot executions
- Faster programs



Promises of Sequential Decision Making

Issue: Not enough data

Solution: Collect more data



Issue: Want better than data

Solution: Optimize actions



Promises of Sequential Decision Making

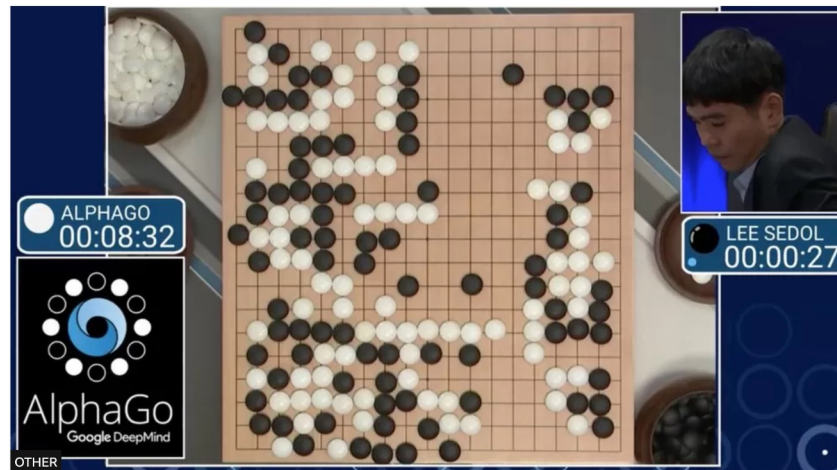
Issue: Not enough data

Solution: Collect more data

- Reinforcement learning
- Planning, search
- Control, optimization

Issue: Want better than data

Solution: Optimize actions



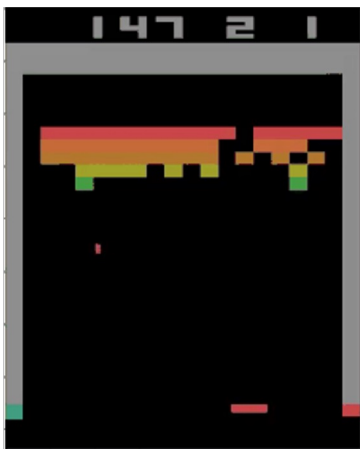
Challenges of Sequential Decision Making

Solution: Collect more data

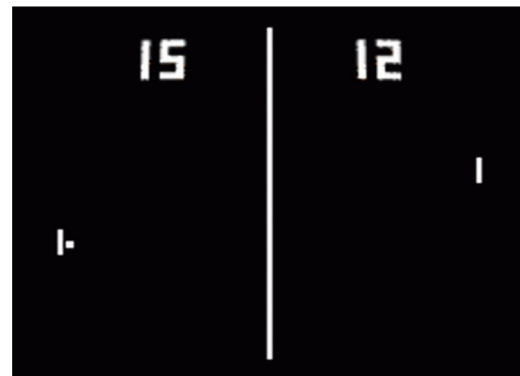
Solution: Optimize actions

Challenge: Sample Efficiency

Challenge: Generalization



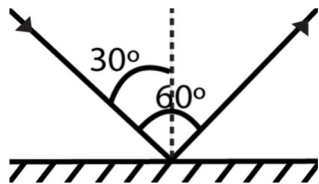
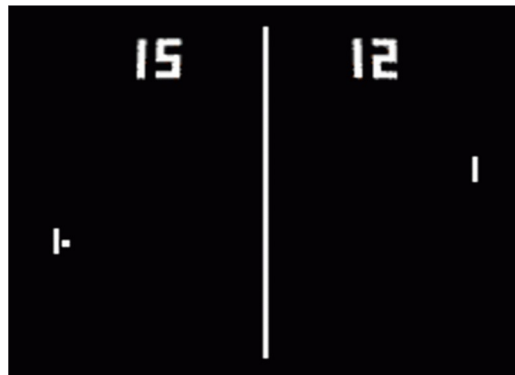
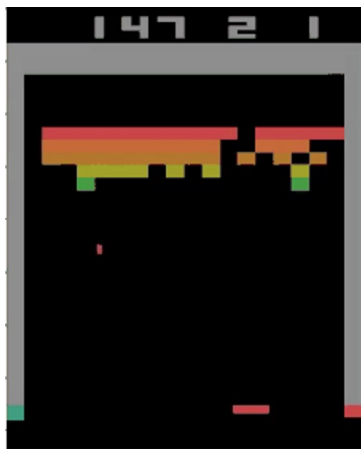
- RL: 38 days
- Human: mins



[1] Minh et al. Human-Level Control through Deep Reinforcement Learning. Nature 2015.

[2] Zhang et al. A Study on Overfitting in Deep Reinforcement Learning. arXiv 2018.

Sequential Decision Making Lacks Broad Knowledge



Physics

“Bounce the ball back.”

Language



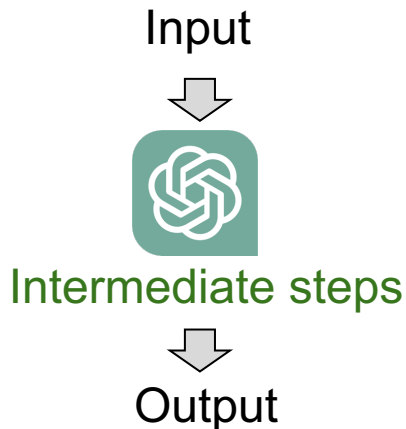
Vision

How Foundation Models Acquire Broad Knowledge

Representation Learning

- **Contrastive** learning (SimCLR, CLIP)
- **Denosing** autoencoding (BERT, MAE)

Reasoning



Internet Data



- [1] Chen et al. A Simple Framework for Contrastive Learning of Visual Representations. PMLR 2020.
- [2] Radford et al. Learning Transferable Visual Models From Natural Language Supervision. PMLR 2021.
- [3] Devlin et al. BERT: Pre-training of Deep Bidirectional Transformers for Language Understanding. NAACL 2019.
- [4] He et al. Masked Autoencoders are Scalable Vision Learners. CVPR 2022.
- [5] Brown et al. Language Models are Few-Shot Learners. NeurIPS 2020.
- [6] Wei et al. Chain-of-Thought Prompting Elicits Reasoning in Large Language Models. 2022.

Today's Talk: Foundation Models for Decision Making

Representation Learning

From suboptimal data

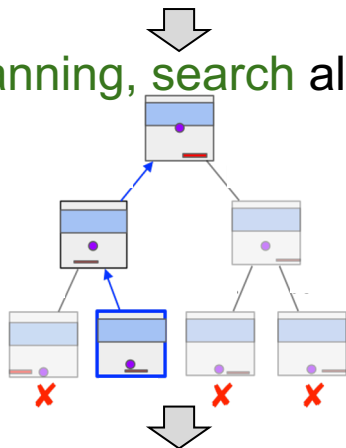


[ICML21, NeurIPS21,
ICLR22, ICML22]

Reasoning

State

Planning, search algos



Action

[NeurIPS22]

Internet Data



[NeurIPS23, arXiv23, arXiv23]

Today's Talk: Foundation Models for Decision Making

Representation Learning

From suboptimal data



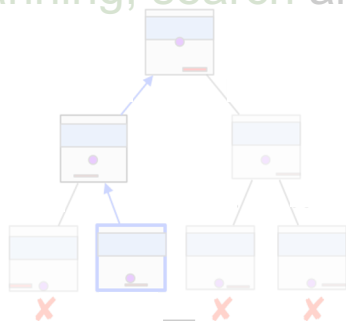
[ICML21, NeurIPS21,
ICLR22, ICML22]

Reasoning

Input



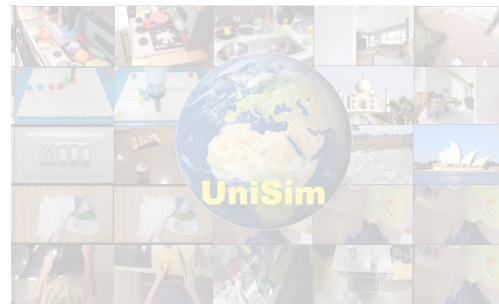
Planning, search algos



Output

[NeurIPS22]

Internet Data

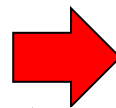


[NeurIPS23, arXiv23, arXiv23]

Learning from Expert Demonstrations

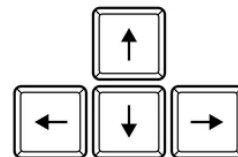
Imitation learning:

S



π

A



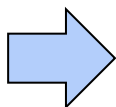
π_* Optimal policy

Representation Learning from Suboptimal Data

Suboptimal data

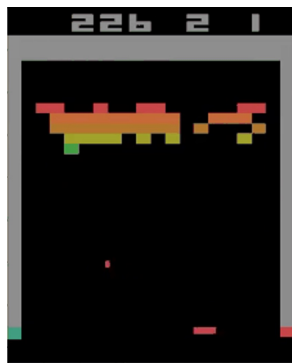


Pretraining

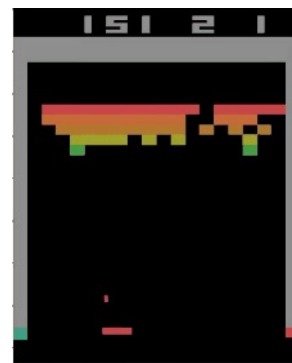


$$\phi : S$$

\bar{s}

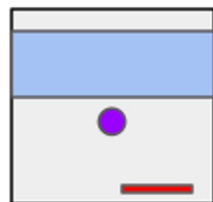


s'



$$\downarrow D_{\text{KL}}(\mathcal{P}(s, a) \parallel \mathcal{P}_Z(\phi(s), a))$$

Z



Representation Learning from Suboptimal Data

Suboptimal data



$\phi : S$

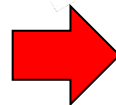
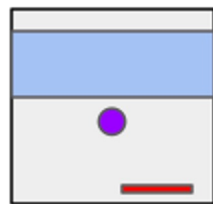
Pretraining



$\downarrow D_{\text{KL}} \phi(s), a \sim [\pi_*(s), a)$

Imitation with representations:

Z



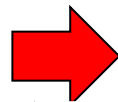
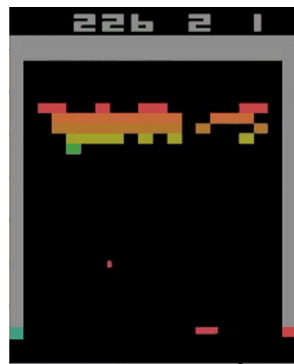
π_Z

A

Intuition: Why Representation Learning Helps

Imitation learning:

S



π

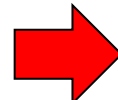
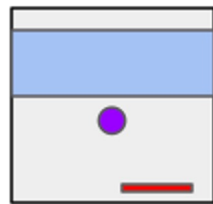
A

- Smaller hypothesis space.
- Need fewer expert demos.

$$|Z| < |S|$$

Imitation with
representations:

Z



π_Z

A

Performance Difference with Representations


Theorem: For any expert policy π^* , representation ϕ , and policy π_Z , $\text{PerfDiff}(\pi_Z, \pi^*)$ is bounded

$$\text{PerfDiff}(\pi_Z, \pi_*) \leq (1 + D_{\chi^2}(\text{red DB} \parallel \text{blue DB})^{\frac{1}{2}}) \cdot \epsilon_{R,T} + C \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \mathbb{E}_{z \sim d_Z^{\pi^*}} [D_{\text{KL}}(\pi_{*,Z}(z) \parallel \pi_Z(z))]}.$$

Learning Goal $\propto D_{\text{KL}}(\mathcal{P}(s, a) \parallel \mathcal{P}_Z(\phi(s), a))$ **Approx. dynamics**

$= \text{const}(\pi_*, \phi) + J_{\text{BC}, \phi}(\pi_Z)$

Sample complexity $\propto |Z|$

Downstream imitation in 

- Expect improvement when $\epsilon_{R,T}$ and $|Z|$ are small.
- Vanilla BC corresponds to $\epsilon_{R,T} = 0$ and $|Z| = |S|$.

Empirical Results on Continuous Control

Suboptimal data



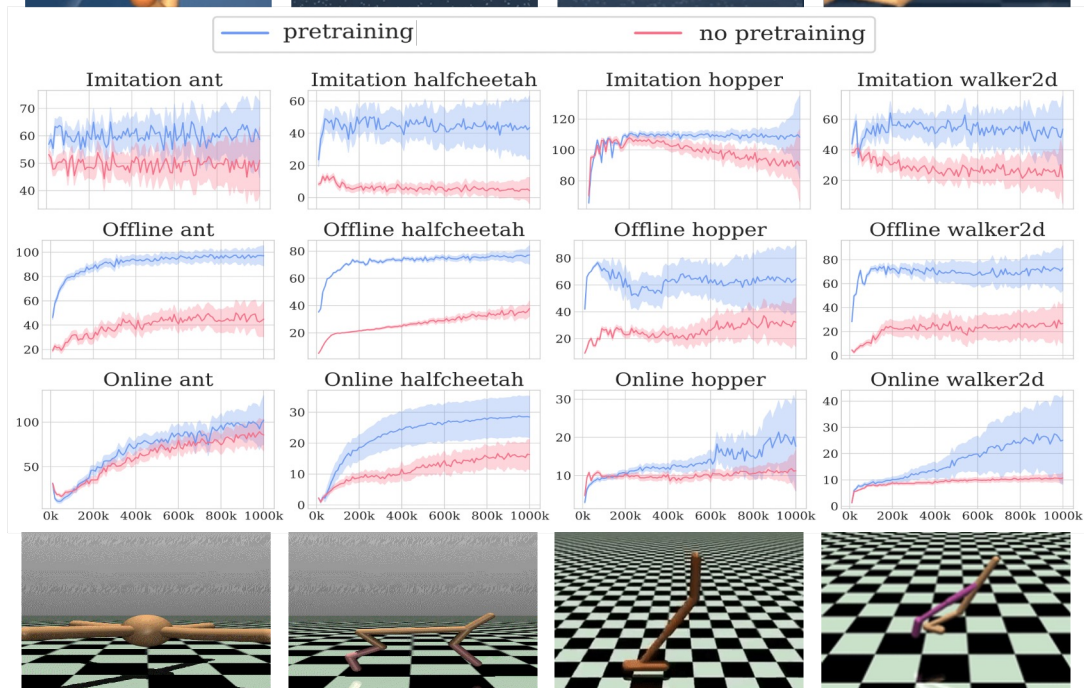
Imitation



Offline RL

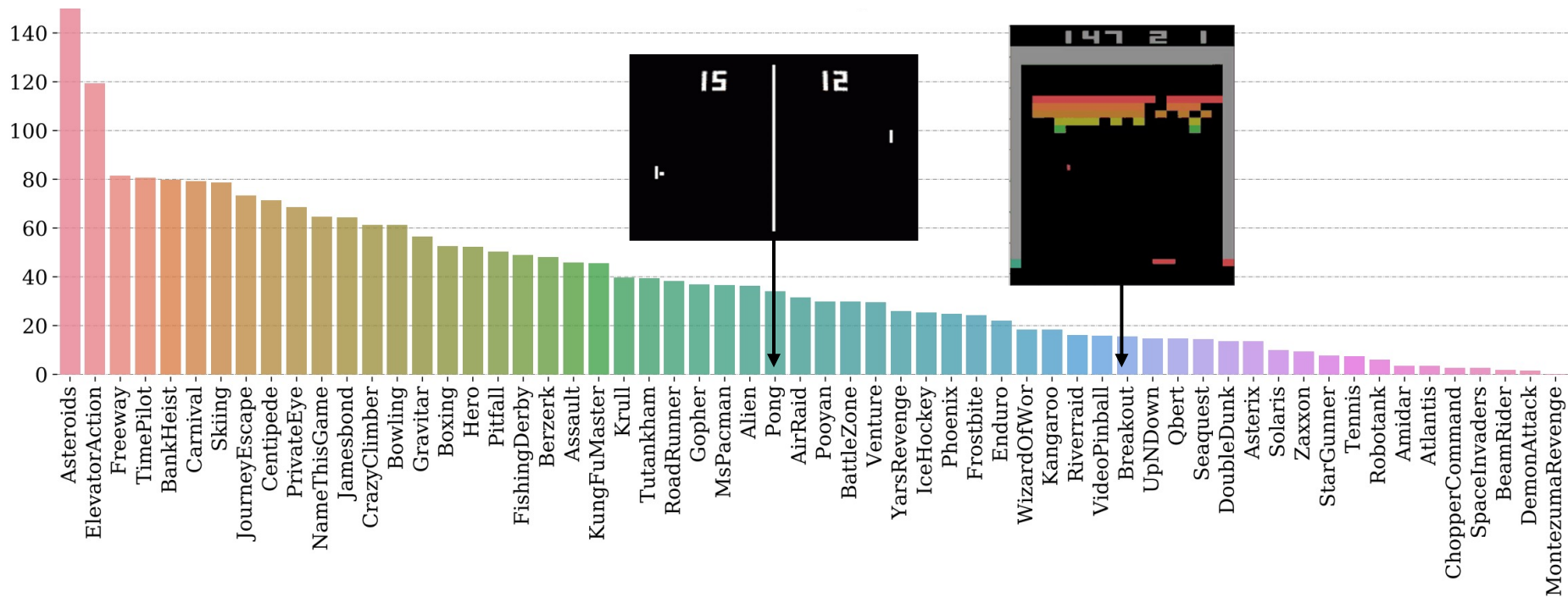
Online RL

With representation



Empirical Results on Atari Games

Improvement % over Behavioral Cloning (BC) without representation learning



Additional Work

Representation Learning



- [1] Nachum and **Yang**. Provable Representation Learning for Imitation. NeurIPS 2021.
- [2] **Yang** and Nachum. Offline Pretraining for Sequential Decision Making. ICML 2021.
- [3] **Yang** et al. Near-Optimal Imitation with Suboptimal Data. ICLR 2022.
- [4] Zhang, Ren, **Yang**, et. al. Linear MDPs via Contrastive Representations. ICML 2022.

Takeaways

Representation Learning



- Use suboptimal data for representation learning.

Takeaways

Representation Learning



- Use suboptimal data for representation learning.
- **Contrastive learning** and **denoising autoencoding** for learning approximate dynamics models.

$$\mathcal{P}_Z(\underbrace{\begin{array}{|c|} \hline \text{blue} \\ \hline \text{purple} \\ \hline \text{red} \\ \hline \end{array}}_{\phi}, a))$$

$$\underbrace{s, a, s'}_{\phi} \Rightarrow \overline{s'}$$

Today's Talk: Foundation Models for Decision Making

Representation Learning

From suboptimal data



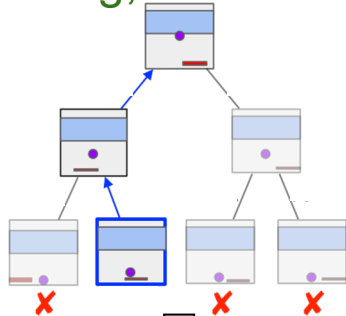
[[ICML21](#), [NeurIPS21](#),
[ICLR22](#), [ICML22](#)]

Reasoning

Input



Planning, search algos



Output

[[NeurIPS22](#)]

Internet Data



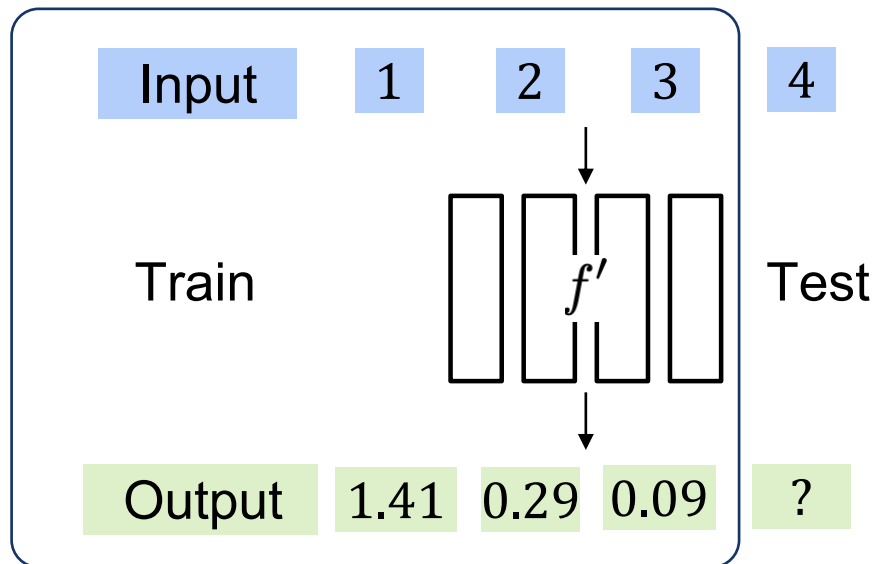
[[NeurIPS23](#), [arXiv23](#), [arXiv23](#)]

Teach Models to Do Math

$$f(x) = \frac{x^2 - 1}{x\sqrt{x^2 + 1}}$$

$$f'(x)?$$

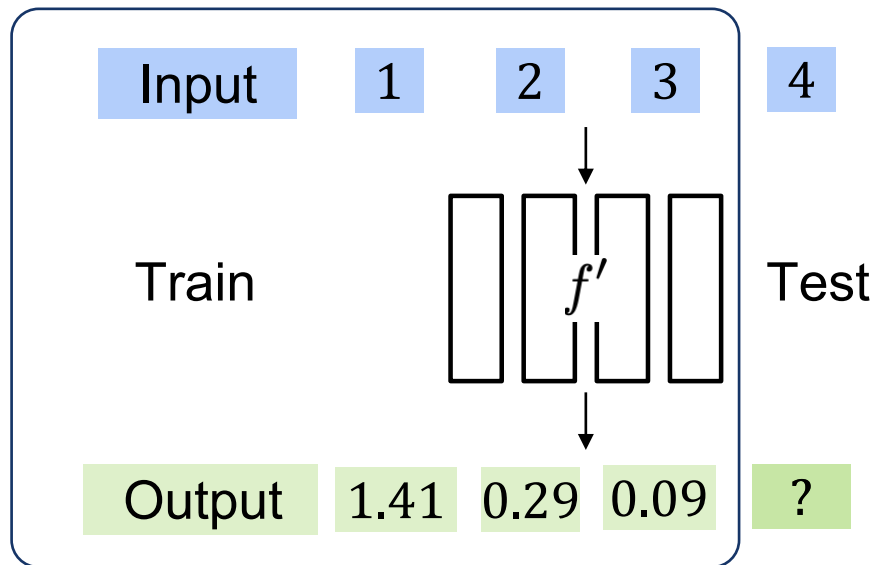
Seems hard!



How Did We Learn Math in School?

$$f(x) = \frac{x^2 - 1}{x\sqrt{x^2 + 1}}$$

$$f'(x) ?$$



How Did We Learn Math in School?

$$f(x) = \frac{x^2 - 1}{x\sqrt{x^2 + 1}}$$

$f'(x)$?

Quotient rule:
$$f'(x) = \frac{(x^2 - 1)'x\sqrt{x^2 + 1} - (x^2 - 1)(x\sqrt{x^2 + 1})'}{x^2(x^2 + 1)}$$

Product rule:
$$\frac{d}{dx}x\sqrt{x^2 + 1} = x\frac{d}{dx}\sqrt{x^2 + 1} + \sqrt{x^2 + 1}.$$

Chain rule:
$$\frac{d}{dx}\sqrt{x^2 + 1} = \frac{d}{dx}(x^2 + 1)^{1/2} = \frac{1}{2}(x^2 + 1)^{-1/2}(2x) = \frac{x}{\sqrt{x^2 + 1}}.$$

Teach Language Models to Do Math

$$f(x) = \frac{x^2 - 1}{x\sqrt{x^2 + 1}}$$



Intermediate reasoning steps

4

↓ Test

Quotient rule:

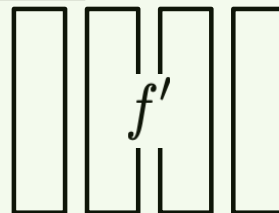
$$f'(x) = \frac{(x^2 - 1)'x\sqrt{x^2 + 1} - (x^2 - 1)(x\sqrt{x^2 + 1})'}{x^2(x^2 + 1)}$$

Product rule:

$$\frac{d}{dx} x\sqrt{x^2 + 1} = x \frac{d}{dx} \sqrt{x^2 + 1} + \sqrt{x^2 + 1}.$$

Chain rule:

$$\frac{d}{dx} \sqrt{x^2 + 1} = \frac{d}{dx} (x^2 + 1)^{1/2} = \frac{1}{2} (x^2 + 1)^{-1/2} (2x) = \frac{x}{\sqrt{x^2 + 1}}.$$



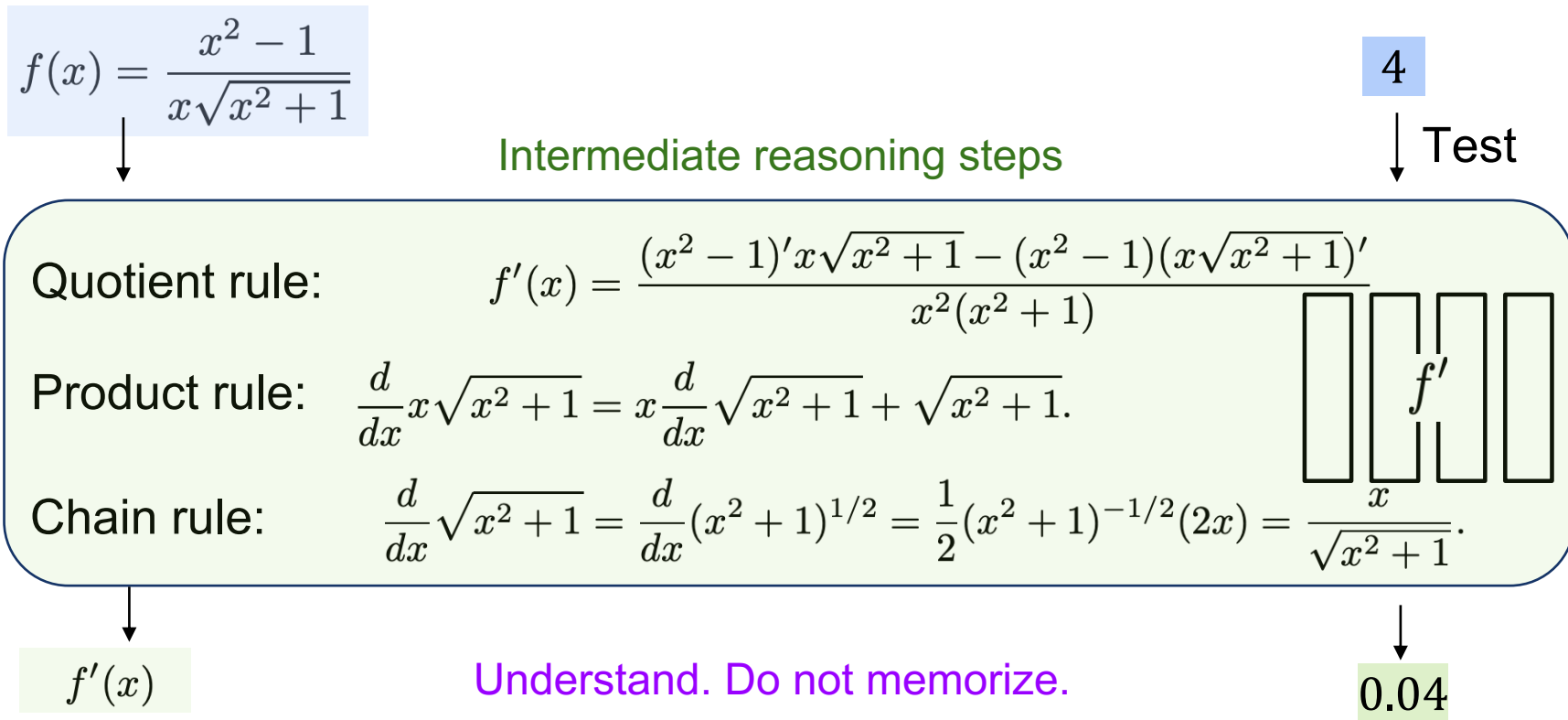
$f'(x)$

Understand. Do not memorize.

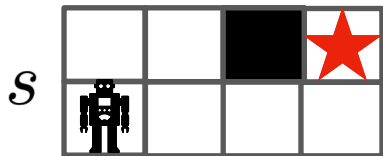


0.04

How is Math Related to Decision Making?

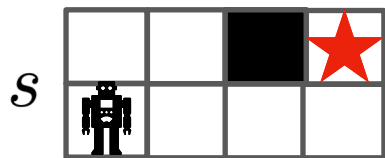


Teach Models to Search

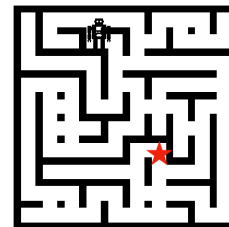
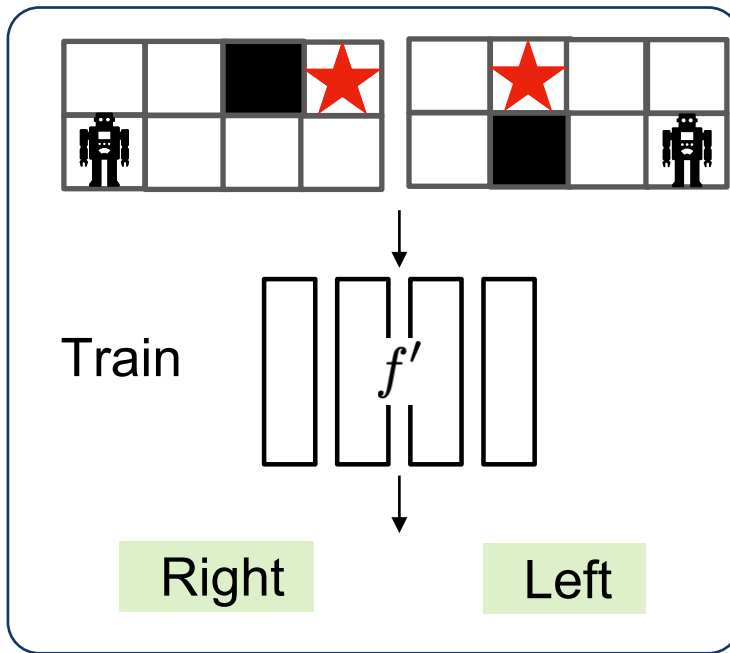


$a?$

Teach Models to Search via Behavioral Cloning



$a?$



Test

?

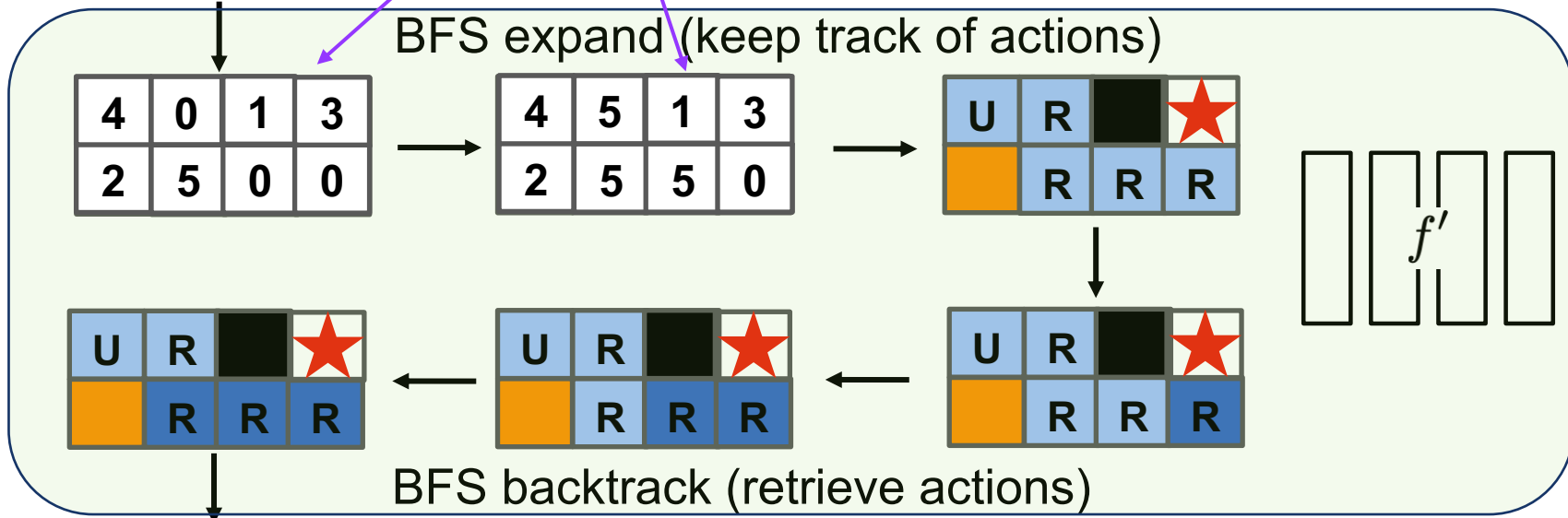
Teach Models to Search via Procedure Cloning

$$p(a, \mathbf{x}|s) = p(a|\mathbf{x}, s) \cdot \prod_{l=1}^L p(x_l|\mathbf{x}_{<l}, s) \cdot p(x_0|s)$$

s

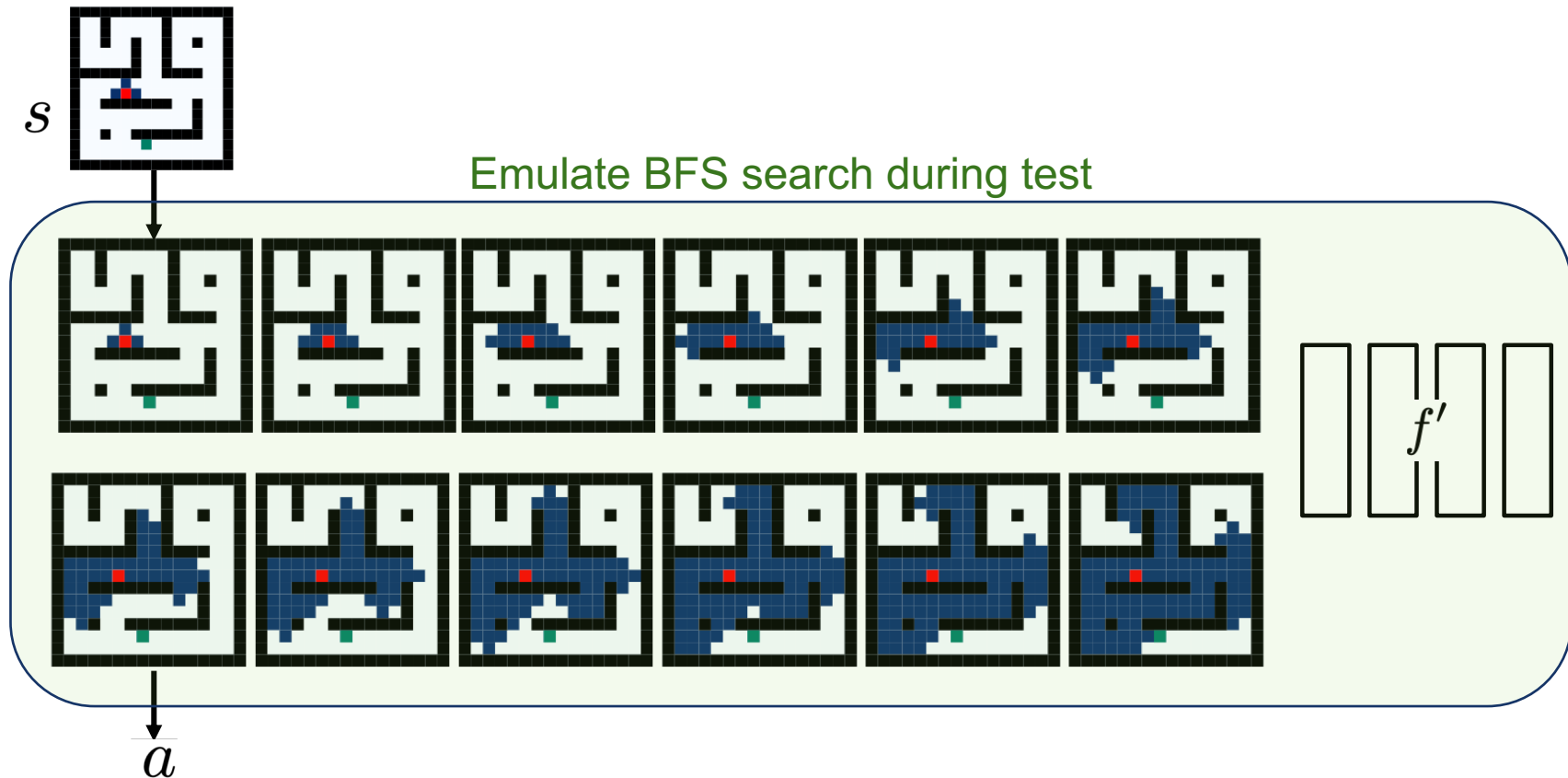
0	0	1	3
2	0	0	0

Teach in agent's "native" language.

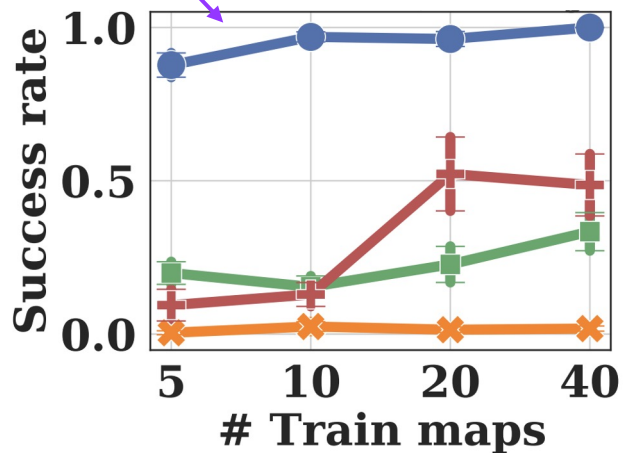


a Right

Teach Models to Search via Procedure Cloning

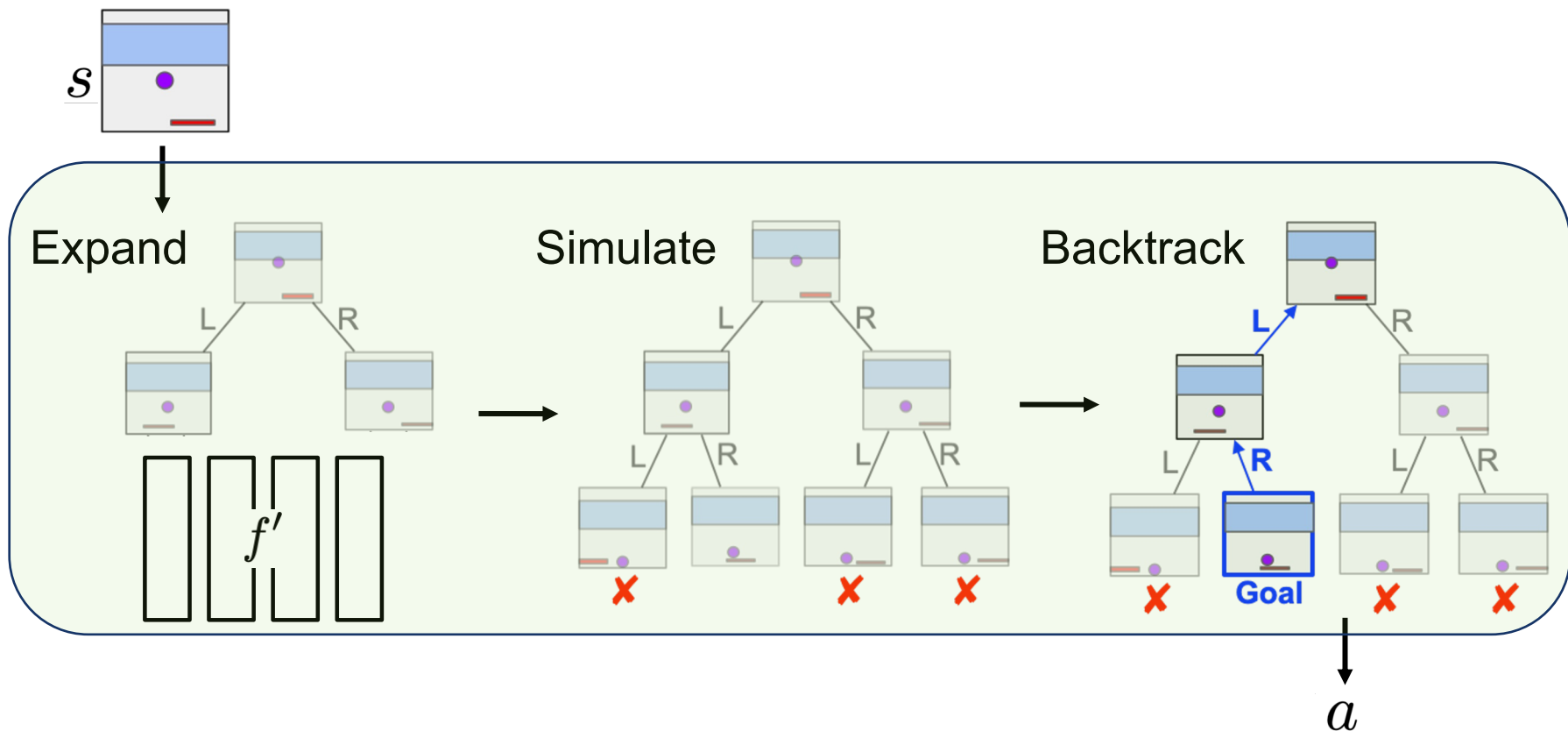


Empirical Performance of Procedure Cloning

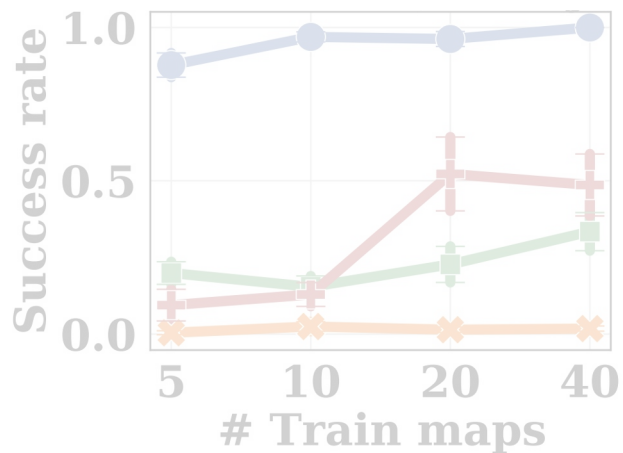


Navigation

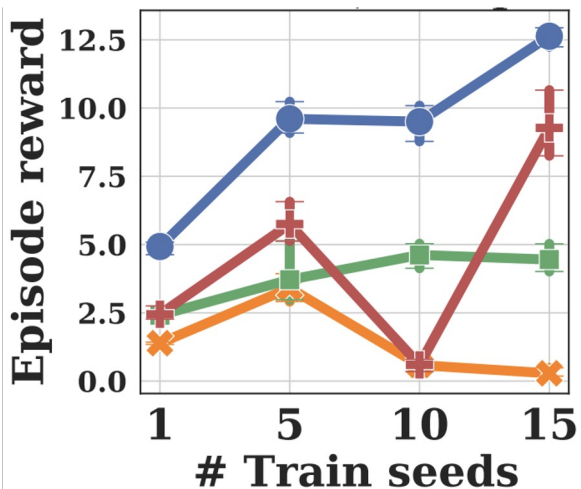
Procedure Cloning is General: MCTS



Empirical Performance of Procedure Cloning

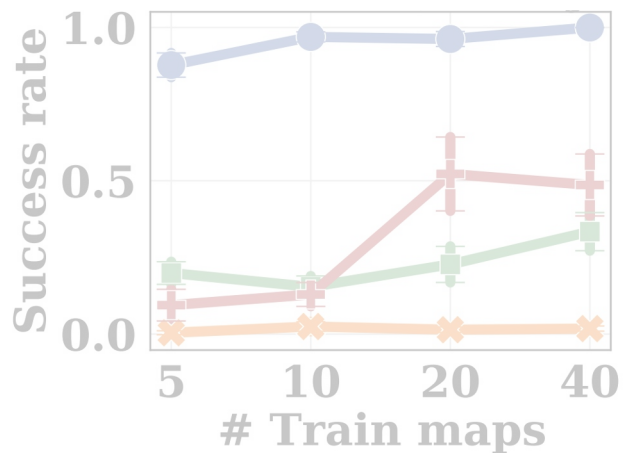


Navigation

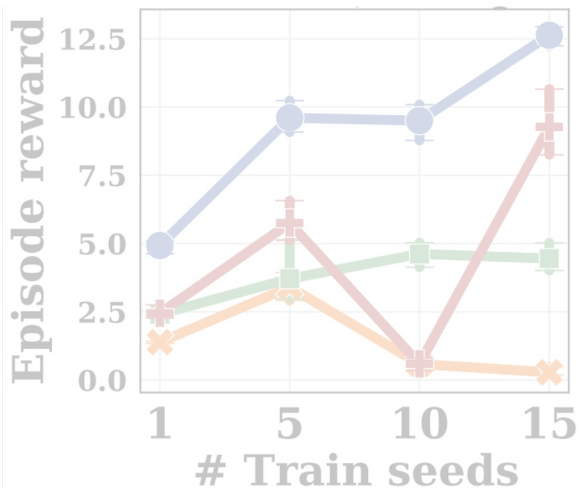


Games

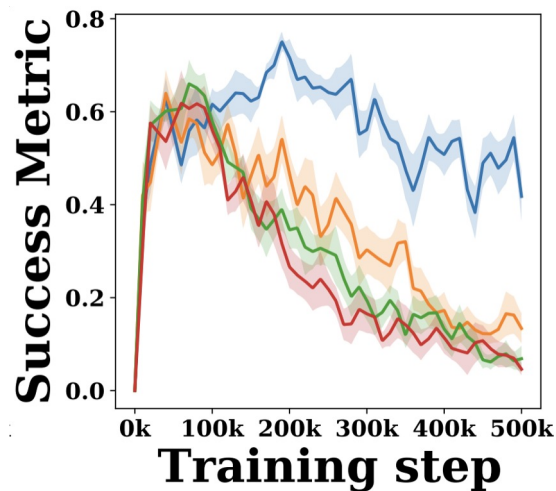
Empirical Performance of Procedure Cloning



Navigation



Games

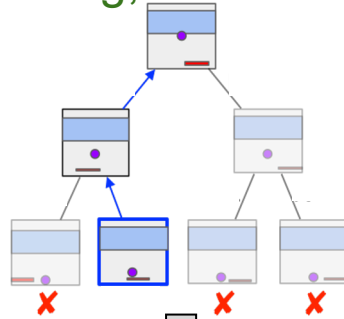


Manipulation

Takeaways

Reasoning in Agents ➤ Teach intermediate computations.

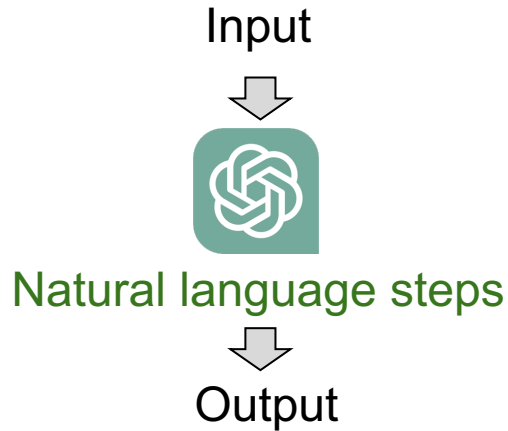
State
↓
Planning, search algos



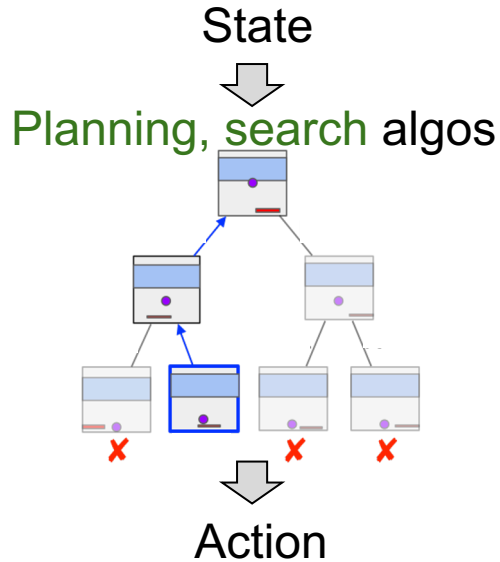
Action

Takeaways

Reasoning in LLMs



Reasoning in Agents



- Teach intermediate computations.
- Don't need to teach in human language. Teach in machine language.

Today's Talk: Foundation Models for Decision Making

Representation Learning

From suboptimal data



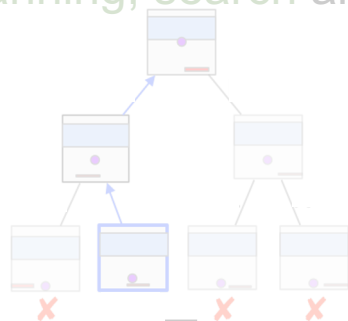
[[ICML21](#), [NeurIPS21](#),
[ICLR22](#), [ICML22](#)]

Reasoning

Input



Planning, search algos



Output

[[NeurIPS22](#)]

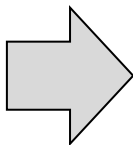
Internet Data



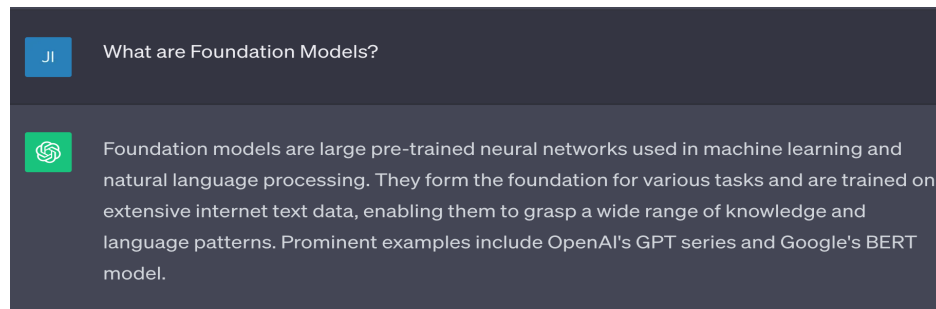
[[NeurIPS23](#), [arXiv23](#), [arXiv23](#)]

Human-Like Chatbot from Internet Language Data

Internet language data

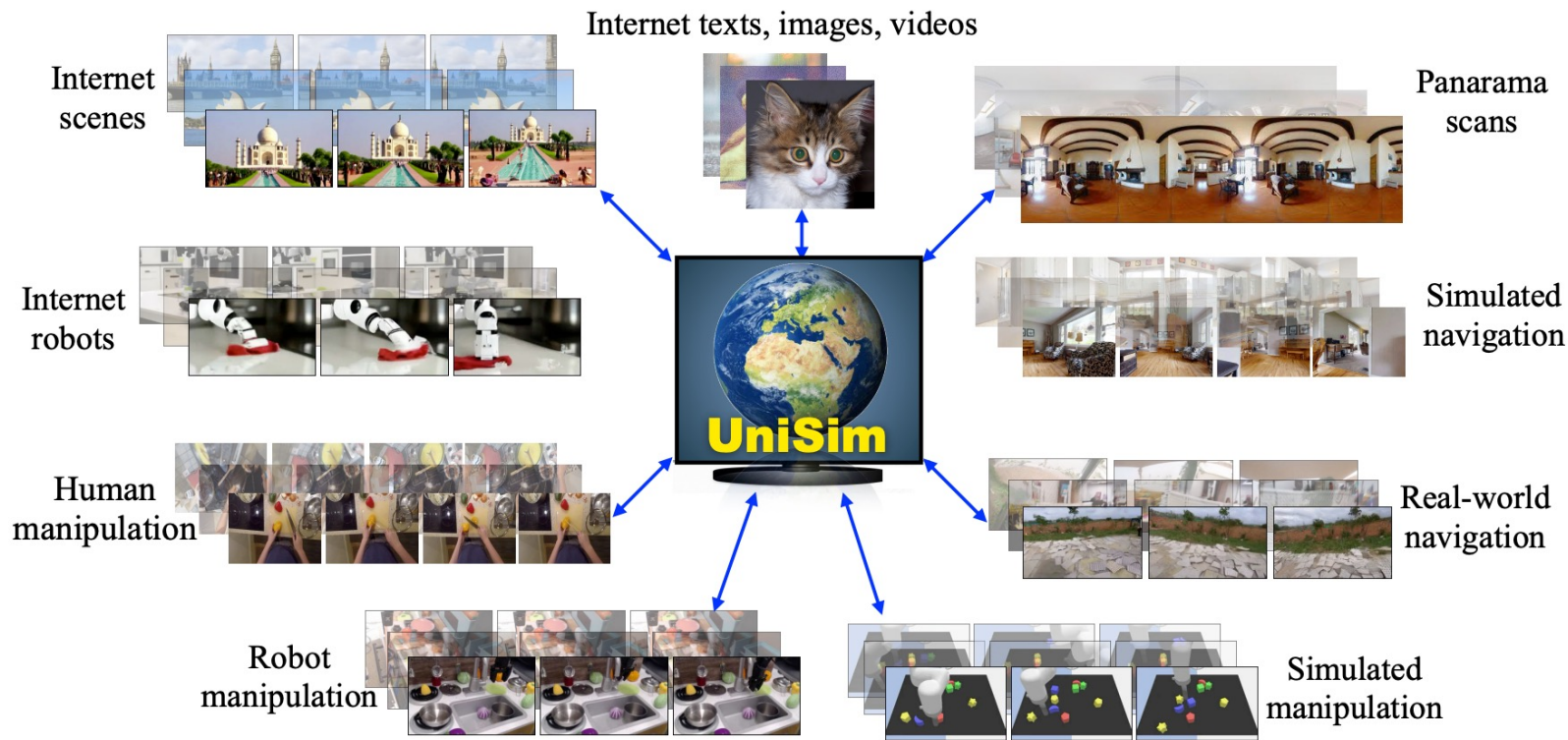


Human-like chatbot

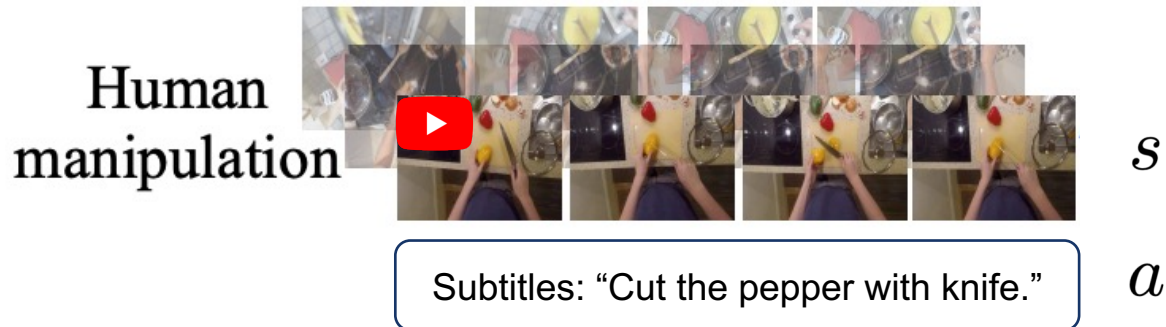


World-Like Simulator from Internet Multimodal Data?

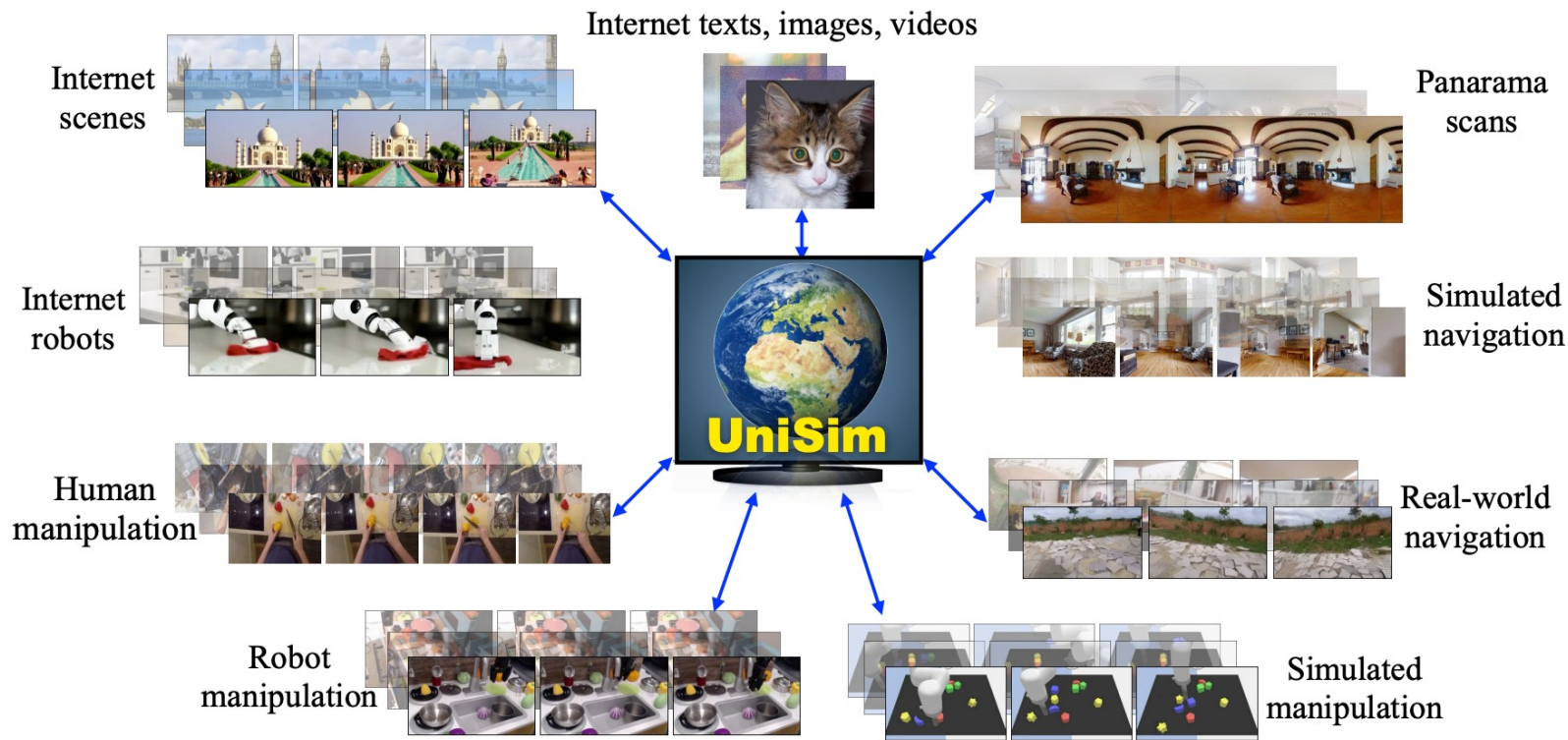
Different state action spaces.



Video and Text as Universal State and Action



Video and Text as Universal State and Action



Video and Text as Universal State and Action

Internet texts, images,

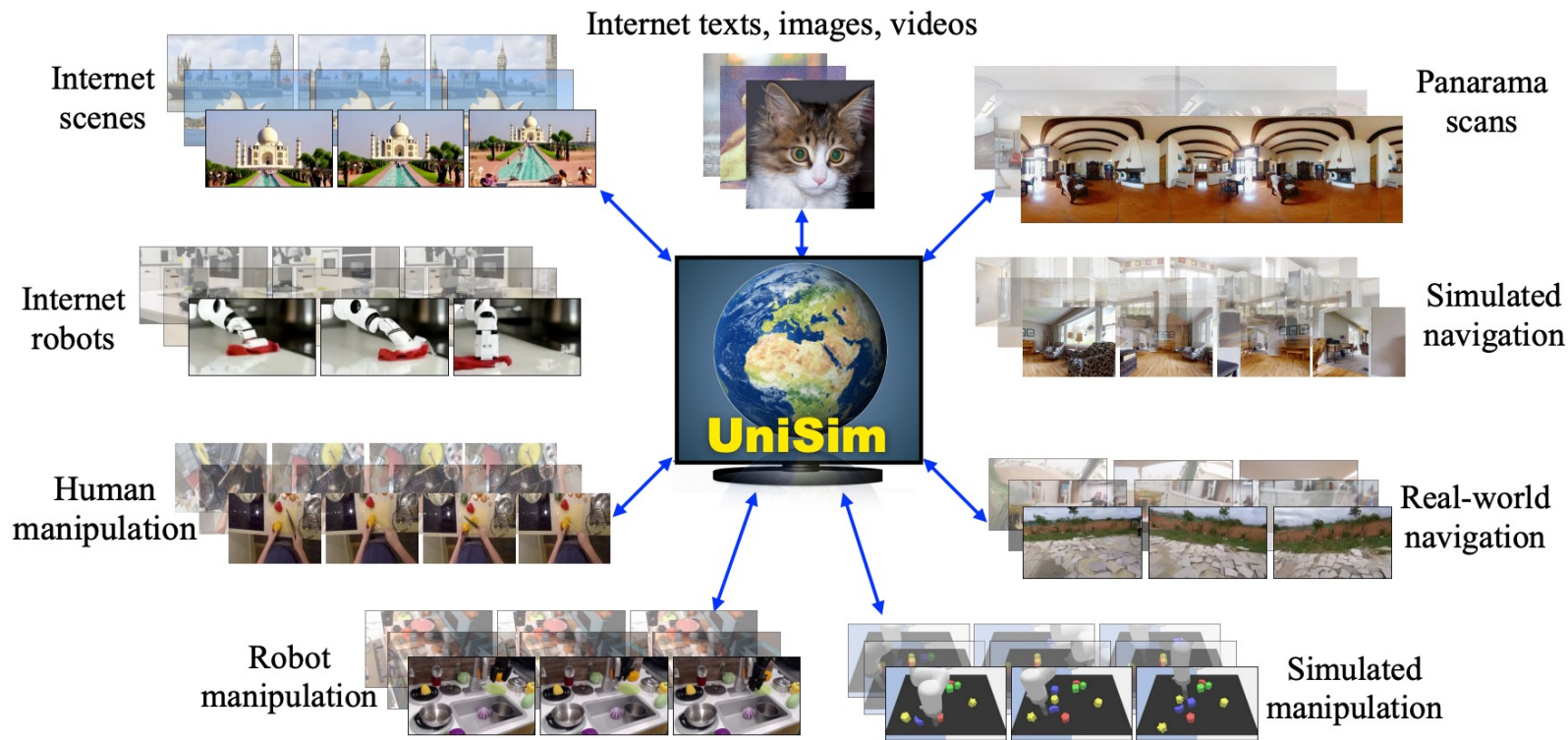


Caption: "A cat **staring** straight."

s

a

Video and Text as Universal State and Action



Video and Text as Universal State and Action



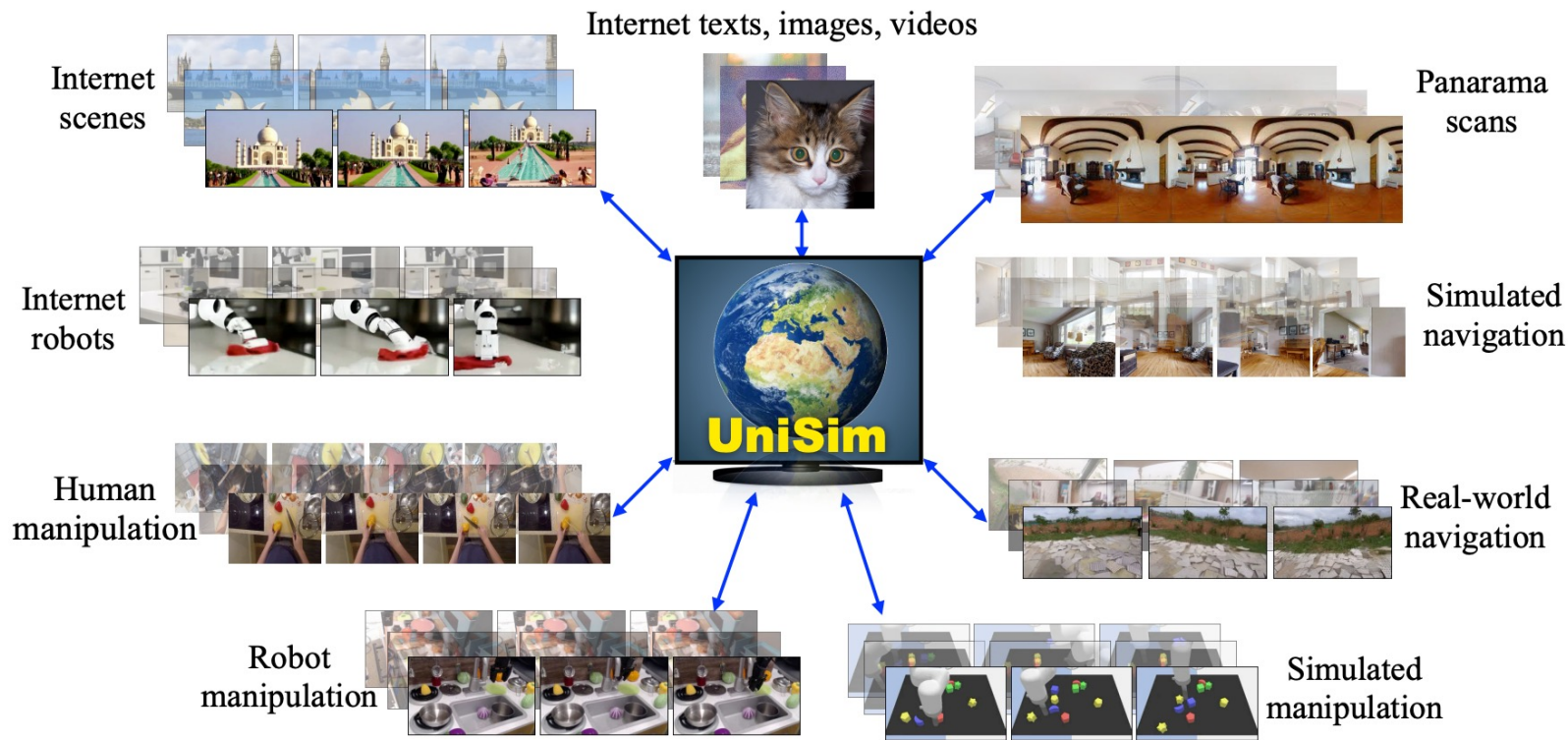
Panarama
scans

s

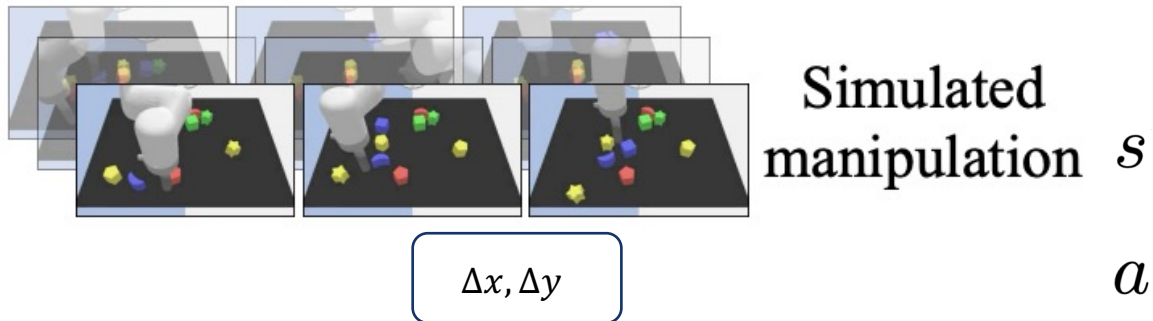
<camera> 90°, <zoom> 1.5

a

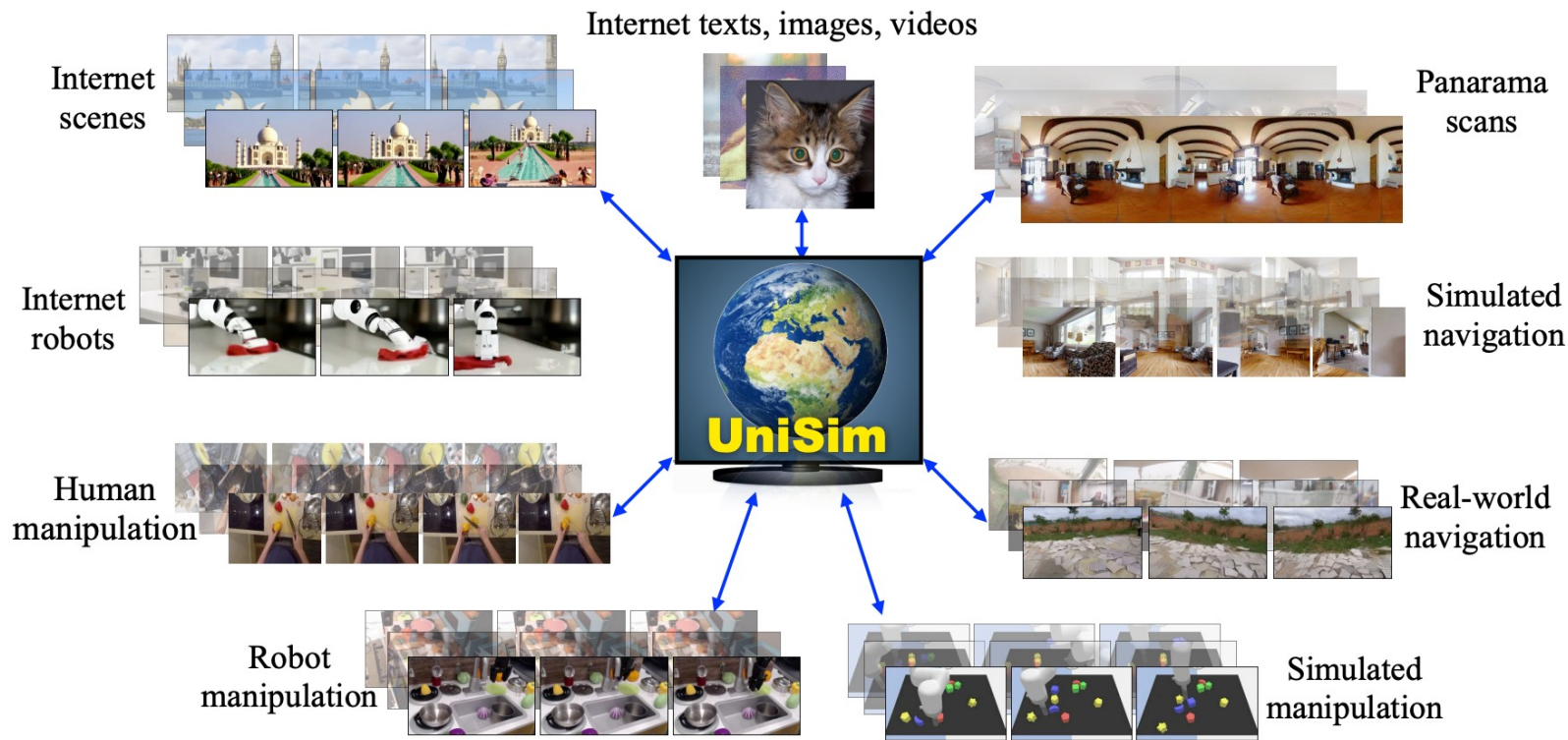
Video and Text as Universal State and Action



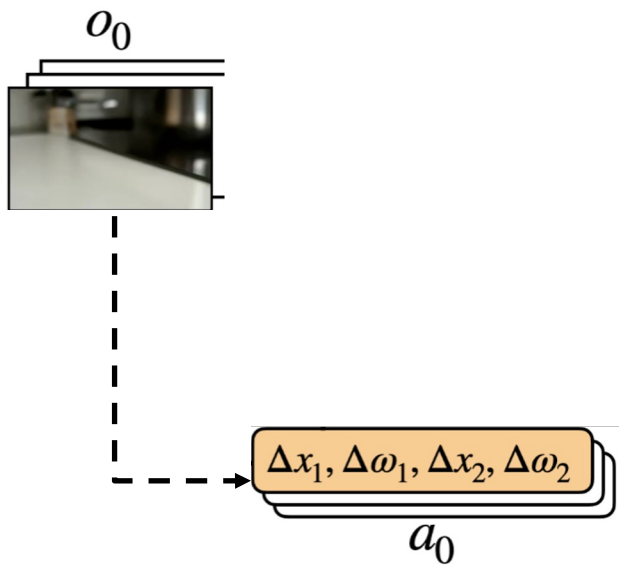
Video and Text as Universal State and Action



Video and Text as Universal State and Action



Text-to-Video Generation as a Universal Simulator



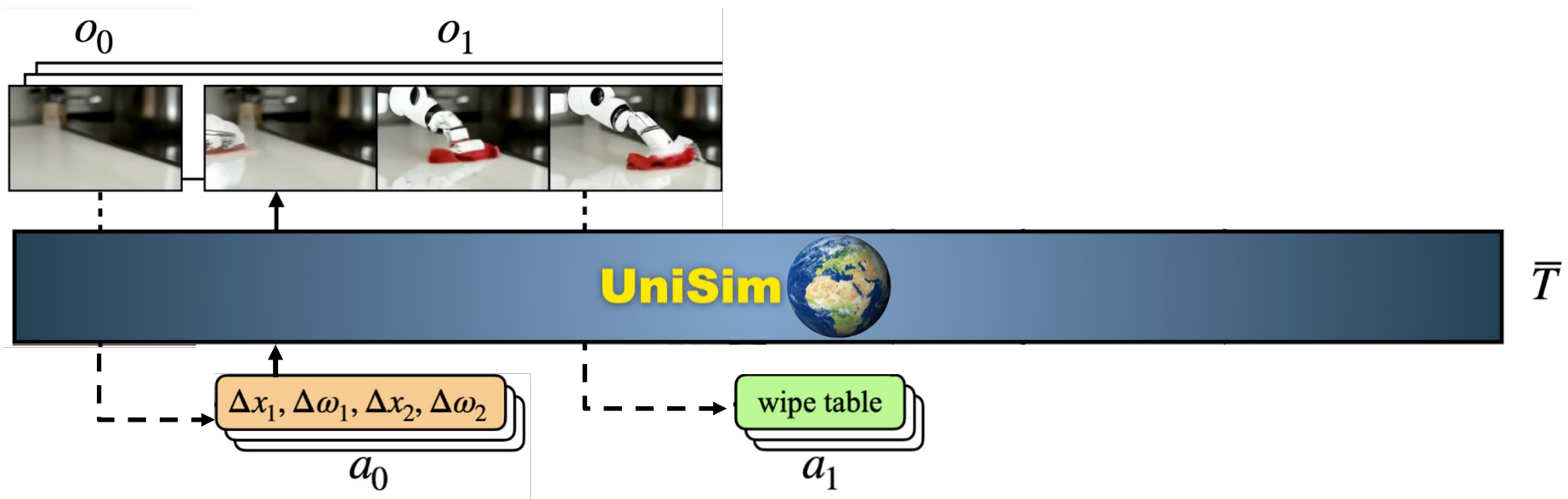
Text-to-Video Generation as a Universal Simulator



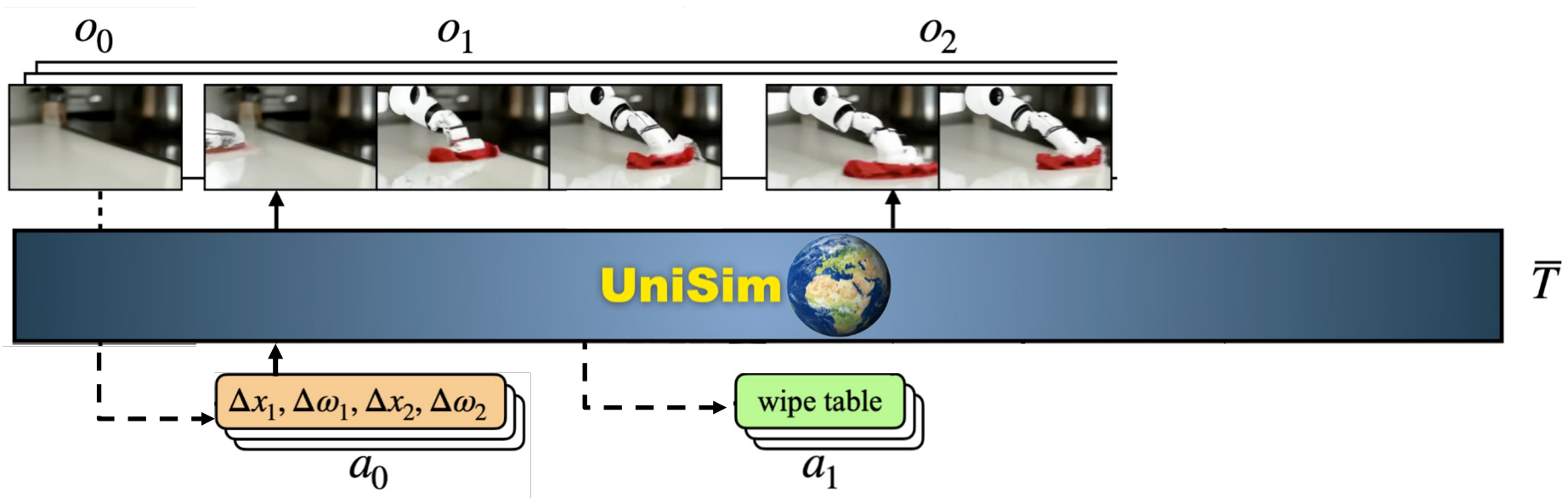
Text-to-Video Generation as a Universal Simulator



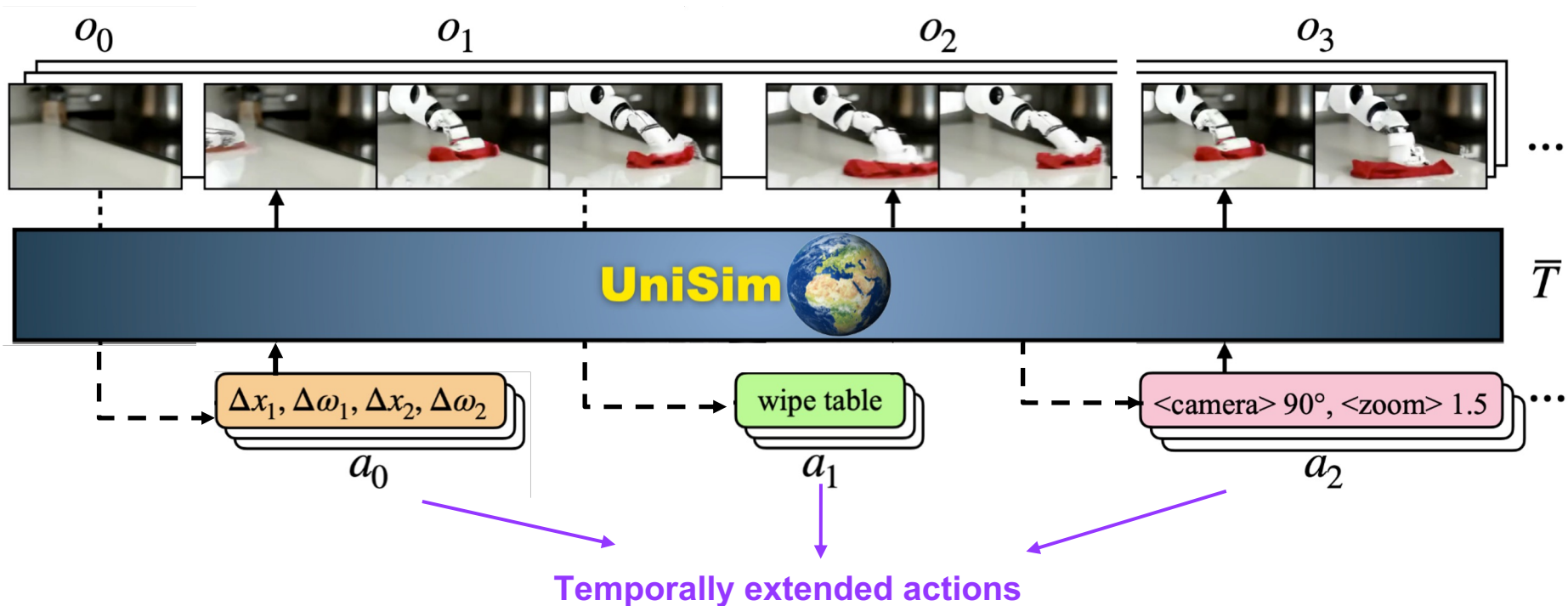
Text-to-Video Generation as a Universal Simulator



Text-to-Video Generation as a Universal Simulator



Text-to-Video Generation as a Universal Simulator



UniSim Demos

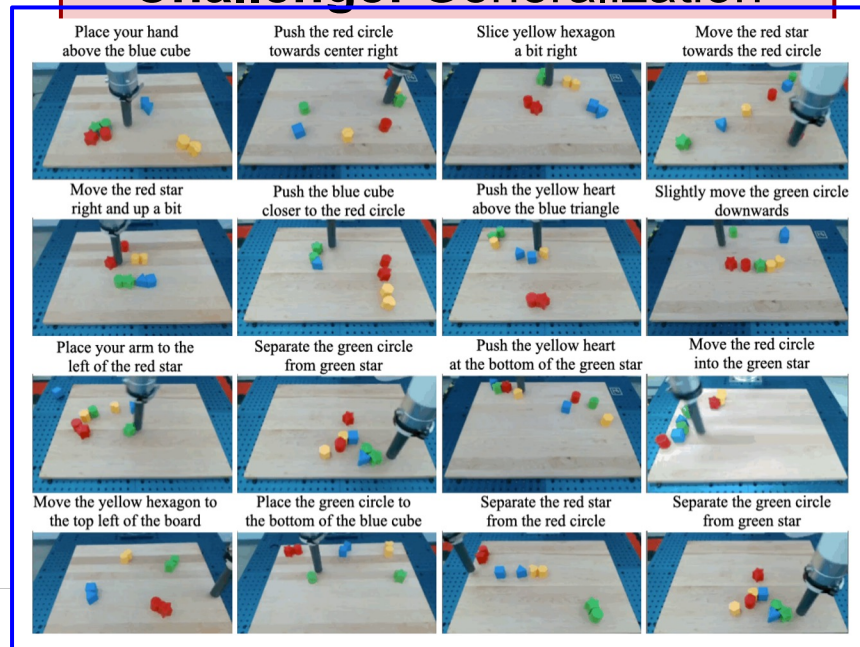
[Demo Link](#)

Application: Large-Scale “Online” RL

Challenge: Sample Efficiency



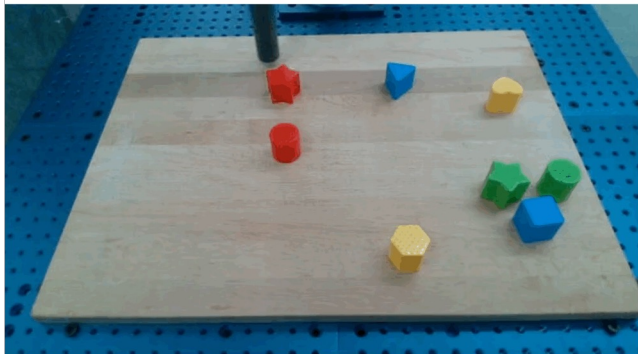
Challenge: ~~Generalization~~ **Universal Simulator**



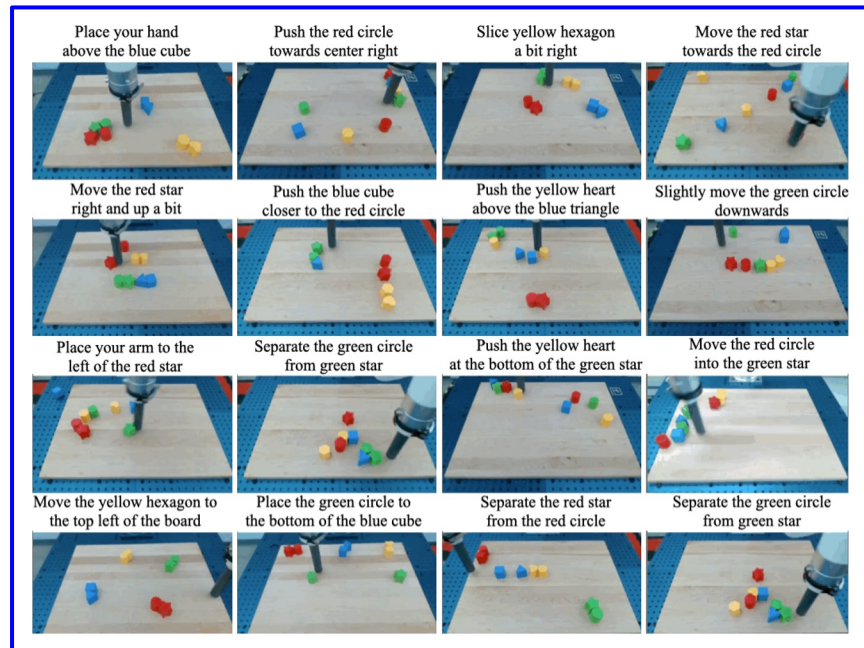
Application: Large-Scale “Online” RL

Zero-shot real-world transfer

Put red star towards blue cube




Universal Simulator



Application: Search and Planning

Search and planning in simulation

 Put the fruits into the top drawer



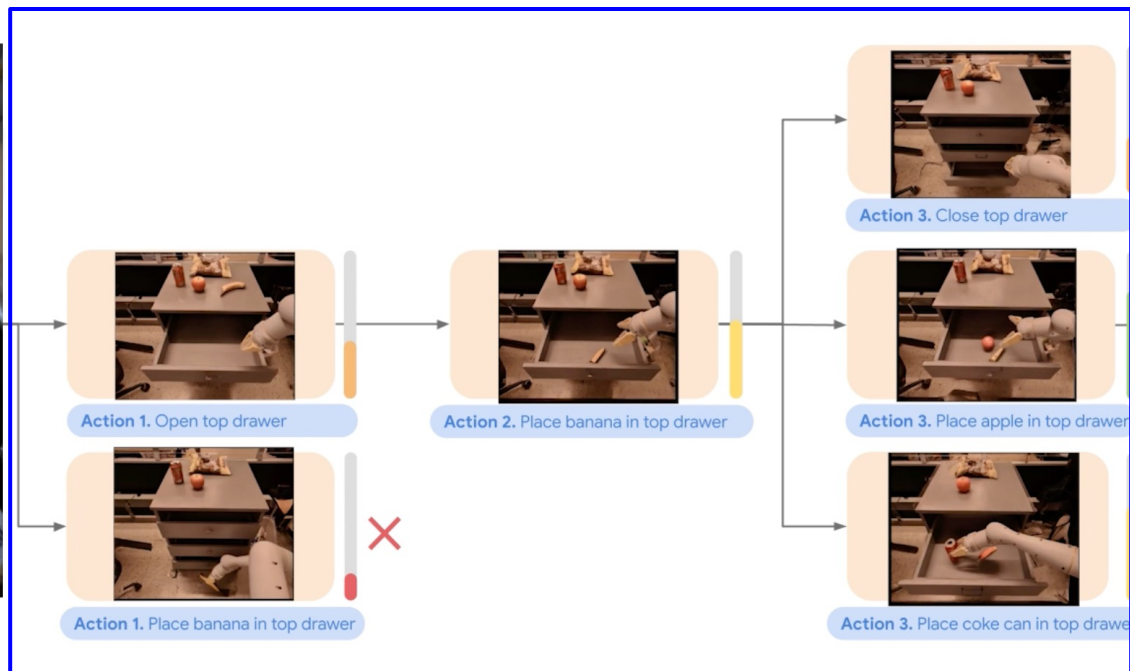
- [1] Du*, **Yang*** et al. Learning Universal Policies via Text-Guided Video Generation. NeurIPS 2023.
- [2] Du, **Yang**, et al. Video Language Planning. arXiv2023.

Application: Search and Planning

Zero-shot real-world transfer



Search and planning in simulation



[1] Du*, Yang* et al. Learning Universal Policies via Text-Guided Video Generation. NeurIPS 2023.

[2] Du, Yang, et al. Video Language Planning. arXiv2023.

Takeaways

- Rich interactive data on the internet to improve decision making.
- LLMs, VLMs, text-to-video models parametrize different components of MDPs.

Internet Data



Takeaways

- Rich interactive data on the internet to improve decision making.
- LLMs, VLMs, text-to-video models parametrize different components of MDPs.
- Large-scale “online” access through generative modeling for RL, search, planning.

Internet Data



Foundation Models for Control and Embodiment

Representation Learning

From **suboptimal** data

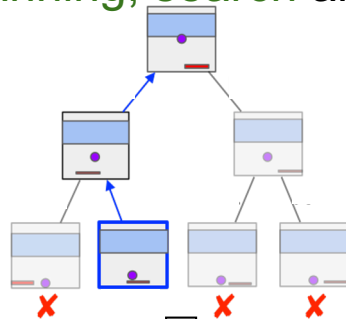


Reasoning

Input



Planning, search algos



Output

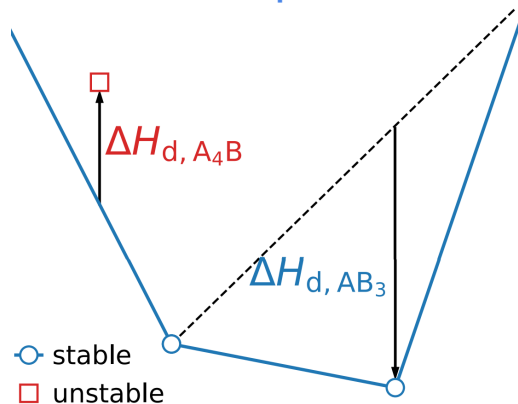
Internet Data



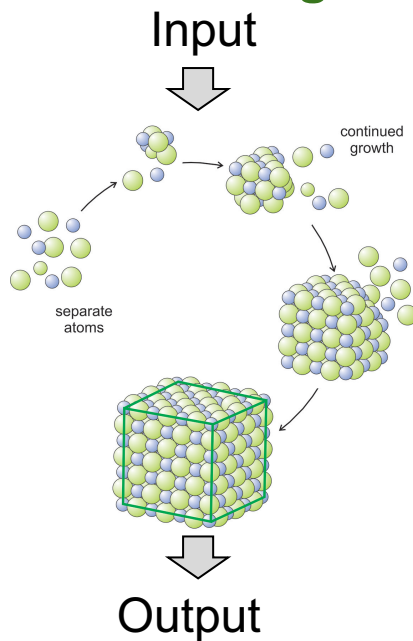
Foundation Models for Materials Discovery

Representation Learning

From suboptimal data



Reasoning



Internet Data



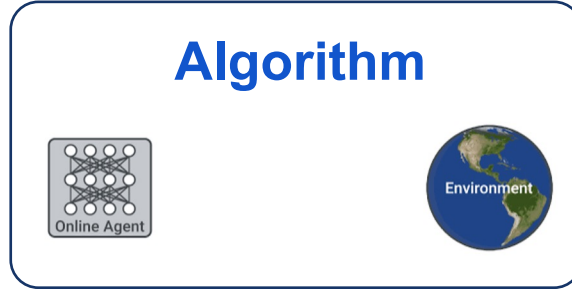
Big Picture: The Past and Future of FMDM

Algorithm: RL, planning, control, optimization.



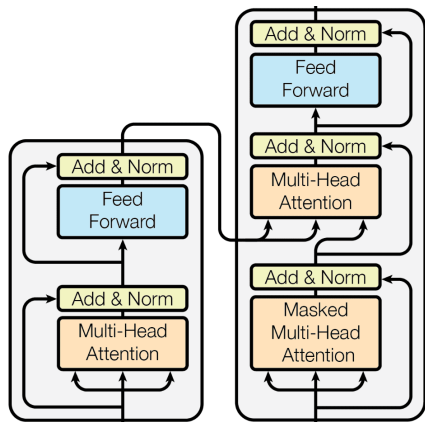
- [1] **Yang***, Nachum*, Dai* et al. Off-Policy Evaluation via the Regularized Lagrangian. NeurIPS 2020.
- [2] **Yang***, Dai*, Nachum* et al. Offline Policy Selection under Uncertainty. AISTATS 2022.

Big Picture: The Past and Future of FMDM



Big Picture: The Past and Future of FMDM

Model: Attention, transformers, autoregressive, diffusion.



Transformer agent



Multi-task environments

[1] Lee*, Nachum*, **Yang** et al. Multi-Game Decision Transformers. NeurIPS 2022.

[2] **Yang** et al. Dichotomy of Control. ICLR 2023.

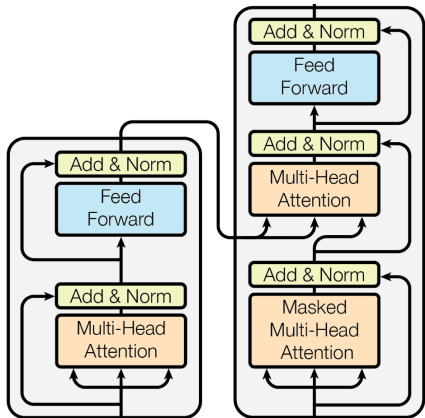
[3] Venuto*, **Yang***, et al. Multi-Environment Pretraining Enables Transfer to Action Limited Datasets

Big Picture: The Past and Future of FMDM

Algorithm

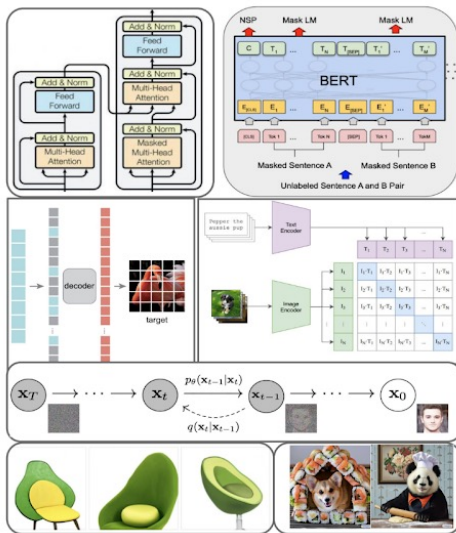


Model



Big Picture: The Past and Future of FMDM

Data: Internet text, image, video, action.



Foundation agent model



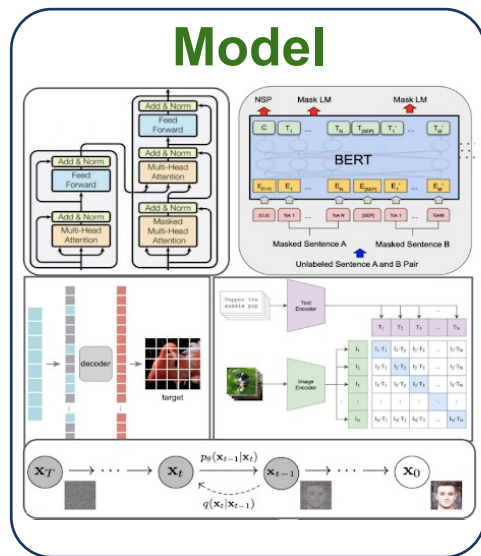
Foundation world model

[1] Yang et al. Learning Interactive Real-World Simulators. arXiv 2023.

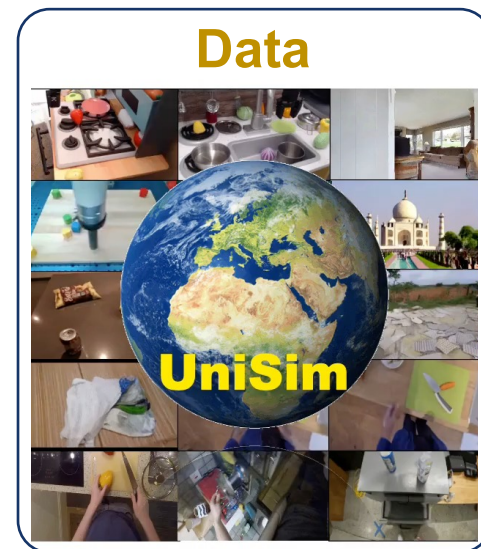
[2] Du*, Yang* et al. Learning Universal Policies via Text-Guided Video Generation. NeurIPS 2023.

[3] Du, Yang, et al. Video Language Planning. arXiv2023.

Big Picture: The Past and Future of FMDM



FMDM



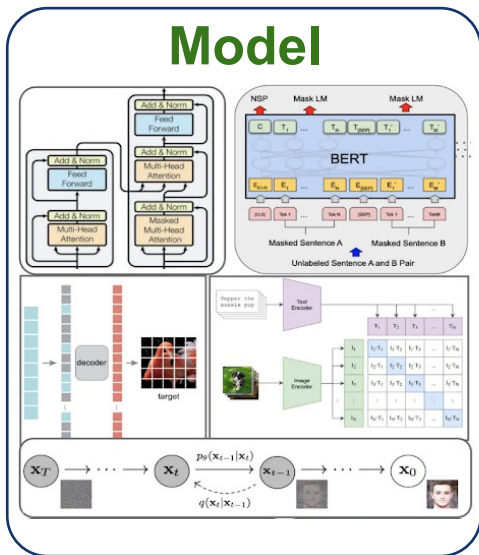
Big Picture: The Past and Future of FMDM

Algorithm



- Algorithm guarantees relies on assumptions of modelling flexibility and data coverage.

Model



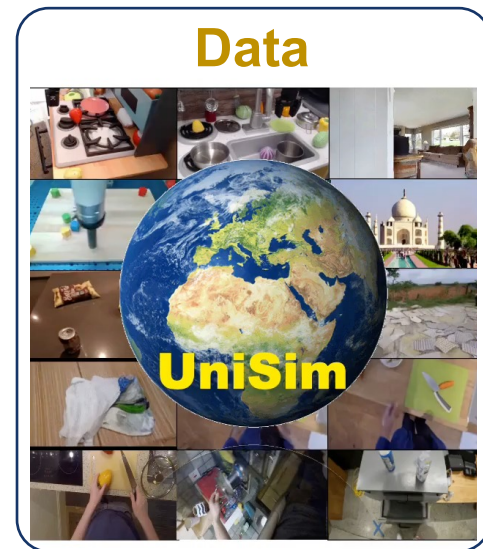
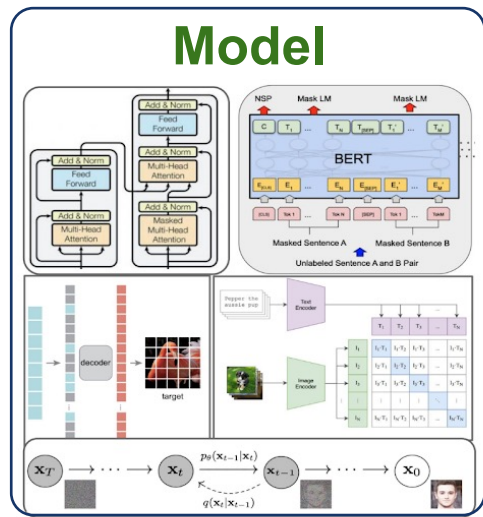
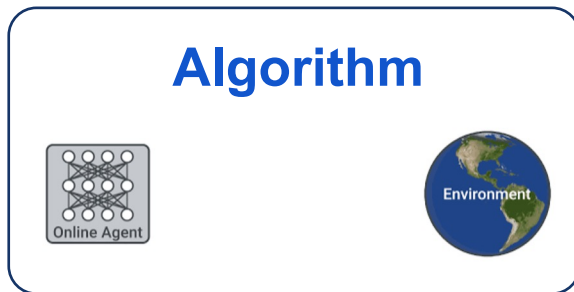
FMDM

Data



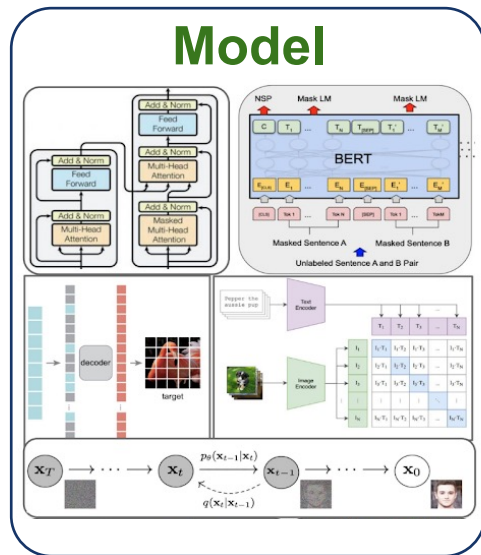
Big Picture: The Past and Future of FMDM

- Models are improved by algorithms (RLHF) and interactive data.



FMDM

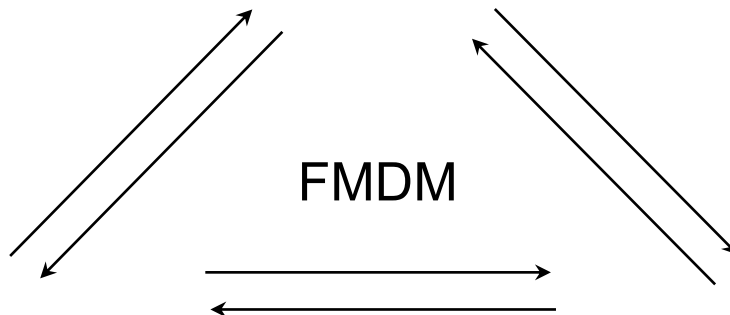
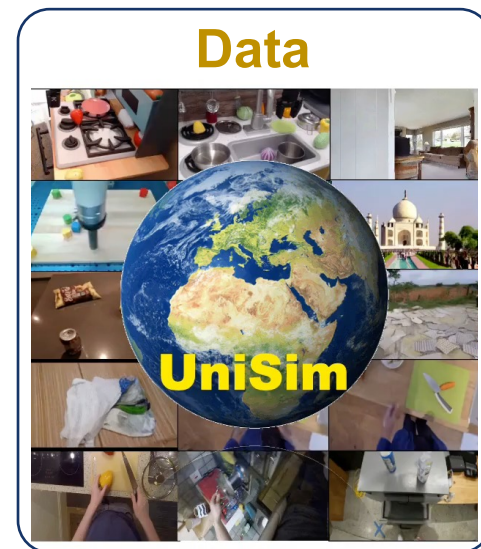
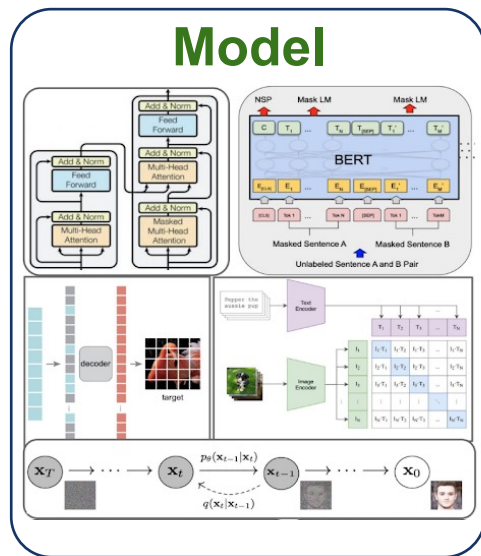
Big Picture: The Past and Future of FMDM



FMDM

- New data are produced / generated by deploying models and running algorithms.

Thank You



Summary

Representation Learning

- Learn **dynamics** and state **representations**.

Reasoning

- Learn **intermediate steps** of algorithms.

Internet Data

- Learn large-scale **agents** and **simulators**.

Outlook

Algorithm

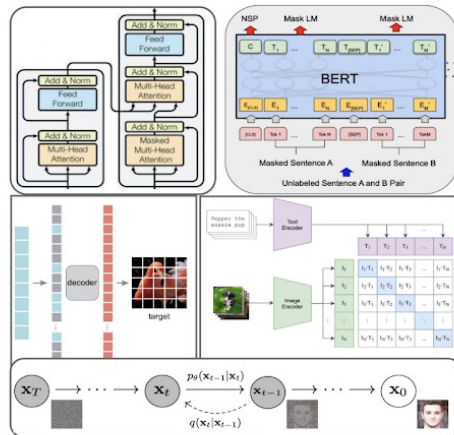
- RL, search, planning.

Model

- MLPs, RNNs.
- Transformers, foundation models

Data

- (Single) task-specific.
- Multi-task, internet



Technical Details

- Representation learning
 - [Sample efficiency](#)
 - [Contrastive learning and random Fourier features](#)

Representation Learning Sample Efficiency

Lemma 11. *Let $\rho \in \Delta(\{1, \dots, k\})$ be a distribution with finite support. Let $\hat{\rho}_n$ denote the empirical estimate of ρ from n i.i.d. samples $X \sim \rho$. Then,*

$$\mathbb{E}_n[D_{\text{TV}}(\rho \|\hat{\rho}_n)] \leq \frac{1}{2} \cdot \frac{1}{\sqrt{n}} \sum_{i=1}^k \sqrt{\rho(i)} \leq \frac{1}{2} \cdot \sqrt{\frac{k}{n}}. \quad (66)$$

Lemma 12. *Let $\mathcal{D} := \{(s_i, a_i)\}_{i=1}^n$ be i.i.d. samples from a factored distribution $x(s, a) := \rho(s)\pi(a|s)$ for $\rho \in \Delta(S), \pi : S \rightarrow \Delta(A)$. Let $\hat{\rho}$ be the empirical estimate of ρ in \mathcal{D} and $\hat{\pi}$ be the empirical estimate of π in \mathcal{D} . Then,*

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\mathbb{E}_{s \sim \rho}[D_{\text{TV}}(\pi(s) \|\hat{\pi}(s))]] \leq \sqrt{\frac{|S||A|}{n}}. \quad (67)$$

Theorem 4. *Consider the setting described above. Let $\phi_M := \text{OPT}_{\phi}(\mathcal{D}_M^{\text{off}})$ and $\pi_{N,Z}$ be the policy resulting from BC with respect to ϕ_M . Then we have,*

$$\mathbb{E}_{\tau^{\pi_*}}[\text{PerfDiff}(\pi_{N,Z}, \pi_*)] \leq (1 + D_{\chi^2}(d^{\text{off}} \| d^{\pi_*})^{\frac{1}{2}}) \cdot \epsilon_{R,T}(\phi_M) + C \cdot \sqrt{\frac{|Z||A|}{N}}, \quad (15)$$

where $C = \frac{2R_{\max}}{(1-\gamma)^2}$

Contrastive Learning and Random Fourier Features

$$\text{PerfDiff}(\pi_Z, \pi_*) \leq (1 + D_{\chi^2}(\text{red disk} \parallel \text{blue disk})^{\frac{1}{2}}) \cdot \boxed{\epsilon_{R,T}} + C \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \mathbb{E}_{z \sim d_Z^{\pi_*}} [D_{\text{KL}}(\pi_{*,Z}(z) \parallel \pi_Z(z))]}.$$

Approx. dynamics model = $\text{const}(\pi_*, \phi) + J_{\text{BC}, \phi}(\pi_Z)$

$$D_{\text{KL}}(\mathcal{P}(\text{game board}, a) \parallel \mathcal{P}_Z(\text{game board}, a))$$

$$\bar{P}(s'|s, a) \propto \rho(s') \exp\{-\|\phi(s) - g(s', a)\|^2\}$$

Define approx. dynamics model as EBM.



Minimizing KL reduces to contrastive learning.

$$D_{\text{KL}}(P(s, a) \parallel \bar{P}(s, a)) = \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s, a)} [\|\phi(s) - g(s', a)\|^2] + \log \mathbb{E}_{\tilde{s}' \sim \rho} \exp\{-\|\phi(s) - g(\tilde{s}', a)\|^2\}$$

$$\bar{P}(s'|s, a) \propto \rho(s') \exp\{-\|\phi(s) - g(s', a)\|^2\} \approx \rho(s') \cdot \varphi(\phi(s))^\top \varphi(g(s', a))$$

Recover linearization via random Fourier features. 79

Contrastive Learning and Random Fourier Features

Theorem: For any target policy π^* , representation ϕ , policy $\pi_\theta(z) := \text{softmax}(\theta^\top z)$ and model error $\epsilon_{R,T}$ measured with **linear** dynamics models:

$$\underbrace{\text{PerfDiff}(\pi_\theta, \pi_*)}_{\text{Learning Goal}} \leq \underbrace{(1 + D_{\chi^2}(d^{\pi^*} \| d^{\text{off}})^{\frac{1}{2}}) \cdot \epsilon_{R,T}}_{\text{Offline Representation Learning}} + \underbrace{C \cdot \left\| \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} J_{\text{BC}, \phi}(\pi_\theta) \right\|_1}_{\text{Downstream Imitation Learning}}$$

Previous theorem:

$$\text{PerfDiff}(\pi_Z, \pi_*) \leq (1 + D_{\chi^2}(d^{\pi^*} \| d^{\text{off}})^{\frac{1}{2}}) \cdot \epsilon_{R,T} + C \sqrt{\frac{1}{2} \mathbb{E}_{z \sim d_Z^{\pi^*}} [D_{\text{KL}}(\pi_{*,Z}(z) \| \pi_Z(z))]},$$

$$= \text{const}(\pi_*, \phi) + \underbrace{J_{\text{BC}, \phi}(\pi_Z)}_{\text{green box}}$$

Only need to minimize gradient of the objective, not objective itself.