



# COMP 336 I Natural Language Processing

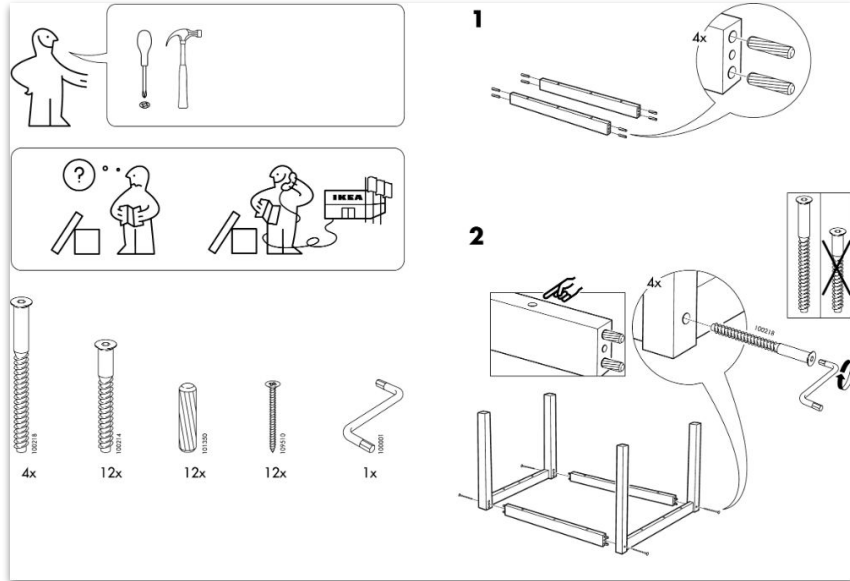
## Lecture 17: LLMs/VLMs as Agents

Spring 2024

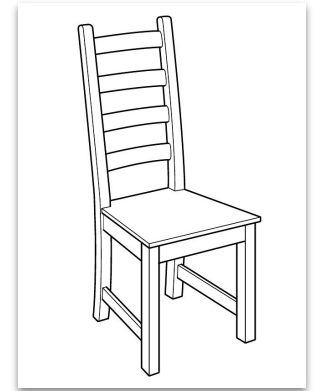
# Announcements

- Two invited talks this Friday, April 12
  - Solving Real-World Tasks with AI Agents (by [Shuyan Zhou](#), CMU)
  - Instruction tuning for LLMs (by [Yizhong Wang](#), UW)

# IKEA furniture assembly



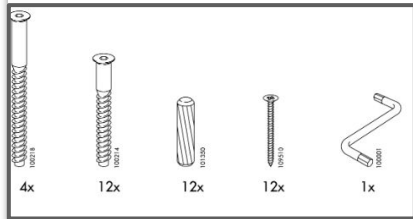
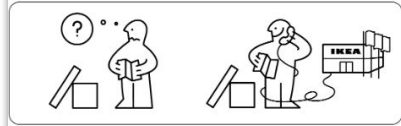
Assembly instructions



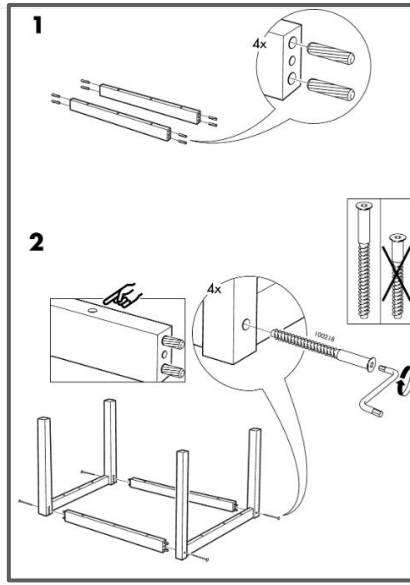
Assembled chair

# Planning with tools

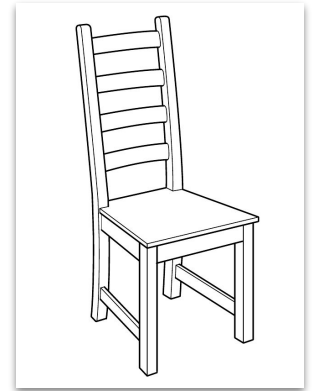
Step-by-step plans



Tool set



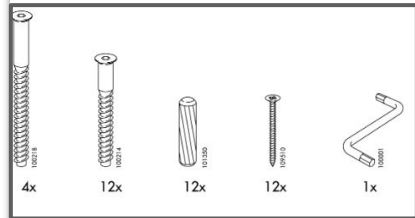
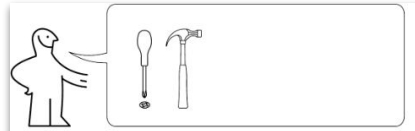
Assembly instructions



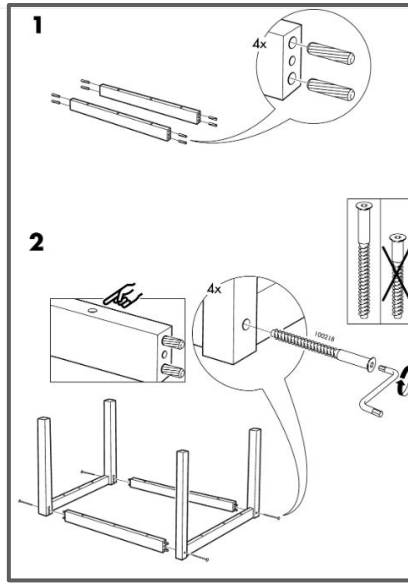
Assembled chair

# Grounding plans into actions in physical world

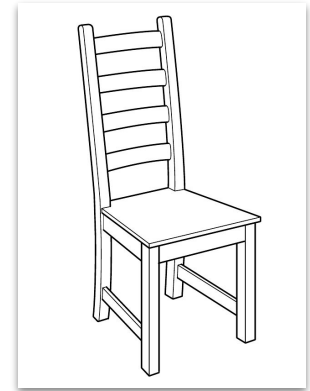
Step-by-step plans



Tool set



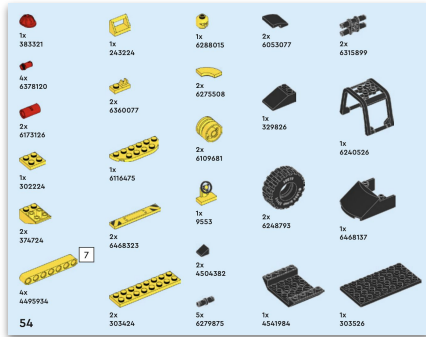
Grounding



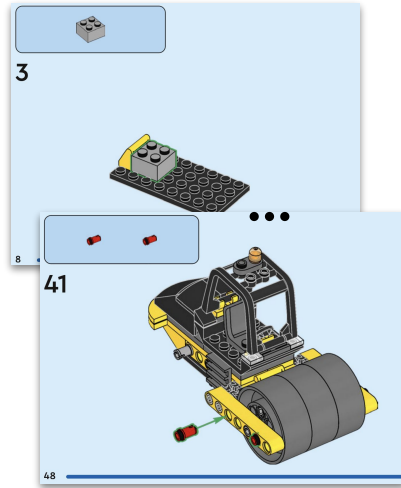
Assembled chair

Assembly instructions

# LEGO building in physical world



Building environments



Building instructions

Grounding



Finished steamroller!

# Computer tasks in digital world



Task instruction: how do I change my Mac desktop background?



macOS environment

## Customise the wallpaper on your Mac

You can change the picture that's displayed on your desktop. Choose from a variety of pictures or colours provided by Apple, or use your own images.

1. On your Mac, choose Apple menu  > System Settings, then click Wallpaper  in the sidebar. (You may need to scroll down.)
2. Select a wallpaper from one of the available categories:
  - *Add Photo / Add Folder or Album:* Controls to choose your own images.
  - *Dynamic Wallpapers:* These images brighten and darken, based on the time of day for your current location.
  - *Landscape, Cityscape, Underwater and Earth aerials:* These still images show dramatic views.



Control instructions



macOS w. new wallpaper!



# Grounding plans into actions in digital world

Task instruction: how do I change my Mac desktop background?

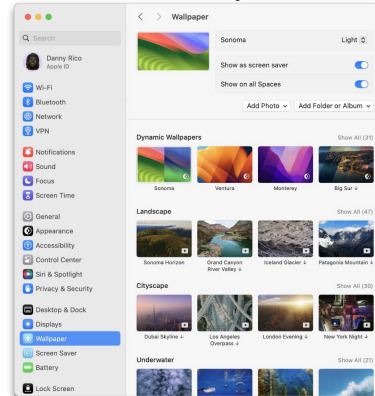
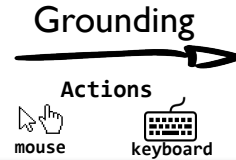


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Control instructions



macOS w. new wallpaper!



# Can LLMs/VLMs be used for these tasks?

**Yes and No!**

**You**  
how do I change my Mac desktop background?

**ChatGPT**  
To change your Mac desktop background, follow these steps:

1. Click the Apple menu () in the top-left corner of your screen and select "System Preferences."
2. Click "Desktop & Screen Saver."
3. In the "Desktop" tab, you'll see a list of folders on the left side. You can browse these folders to find images stored on your Mac.
4. Click on an image to preview it as your desktop background. You can also add your own photo by dragging an image from a Finder window directly into the preview area or by clicking the "+" button below the folders list to add a new folder.
5. Once you select an image, it will automatically set as your desktop background.

If you have multiple displays, you can select a different image for each screen by dragging the preferences window to the display you want to change and then selecting a new image.



**You**  
can you help me assemble my IKEA chair?

**ChatGPT**  
Certainly! While I can provide some general advice for assembling IKEA chairs, the specific steps can vary greatly depending on the model you have. Here's a general approach to assembling most IKEA chairs:

1.

**Unpack and Organize:** Open the package and carefully lay out all the parts on a clean, flat surface, such as the floor. This helps prevent pieces from getting lost and makes it easier to identify them as you follow the instructions.

2.

**Check the Instructions:** Locate the assembly instructions within the package. Take a moment to review these instructions thoroughly before starting, to familiarize yourself with the process and the parts involved.

3.

# Can LLMs/VLMs be used for these tasks?

Yes and No!

ChatGPT is able to generate step-by-step plans

**You**  
how do I change my Mac desktop background?

**ChatGPT**  
To change your Mac desktop background, follow these steps:

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Task instruction:  
how do I change my Mac desktop background?



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Control instructions

# Can LLMs/VLMs be used for these tasks?

Yes and No!

However, ChatGPT **cannot** execute tasks on your Mac by grounding plans into actions.

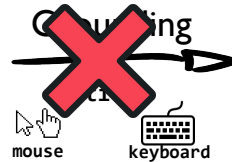
**You**  
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1. Click the Apple menu () in the top-left corner of your screen and select "System Preferences."
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macOS w. new wallpaper!

# Can LLMs/VLMs be used for these tasks?

Yes and **No!**

At times, ChatGPT also **cannot** generate step-by-step plans w.o interacting in the environment

**You**  
can you help me assemble my IKEA chair?

**ChatGPT**  
Certainly! While I can provide some general advice for assembling IKEA chairs, the specific steps can vary greatly depending on the model you have. Here's a general approach to assembling most IKEA chairs:

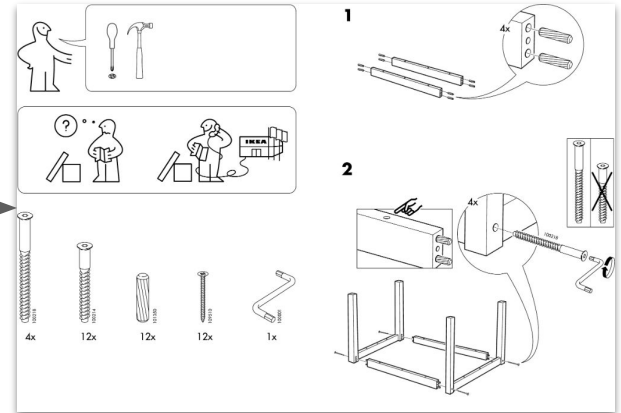
- 1.

**Unpack and Organize:** Open the package and carefully lay out all the parts on a clean, flat surface, such as the floor. This helps prevent pieces from getting lost and makes it easier to identify them as you follow the instructions.

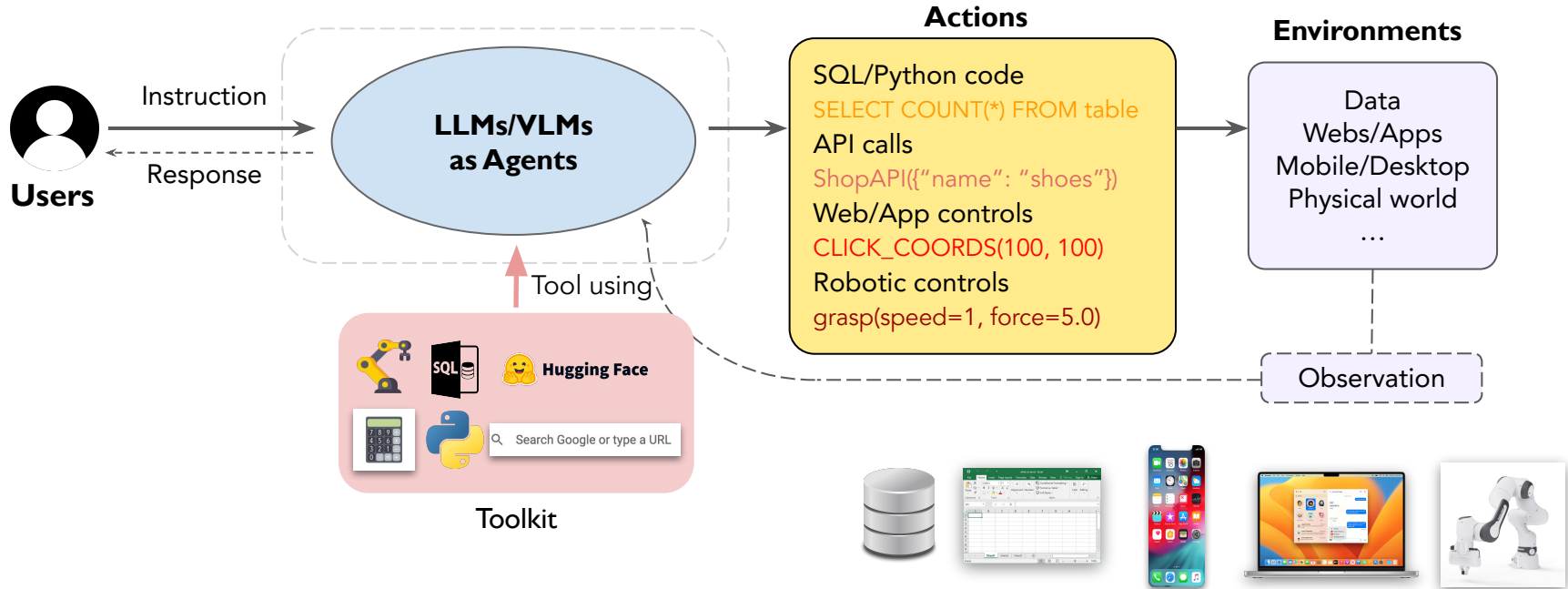
- 2.

**Check the Instructions:** Locate the assembly instructions within the package. Take a moment to review these instructions thoroughly before starting, to familiarize yourself with the process and the parts involved.

- 3.

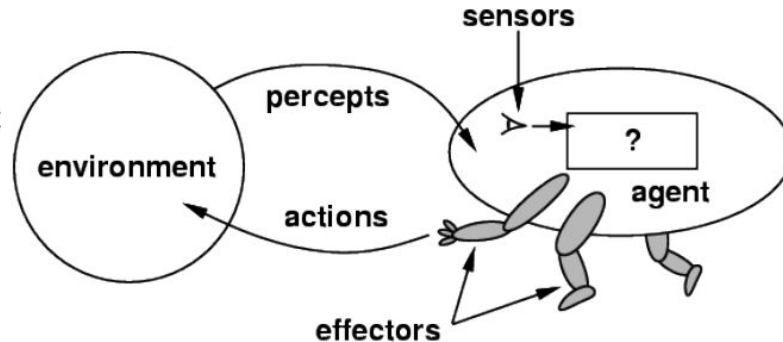


# Solution: LLMs/VLMs as agents



# Wait...what is an intelligent agent?

- Definition: An **intelligent agent** perceives its environment via **sensors** and acts rationally upon that environment with its **effectors**.
- A discrete agent receives **percepts** one at a time, and maps this percept sequence to a sequence of discrete **actions**.
- Properties
  - Autonomous
  - Reactive to the environment
  - Pro-active (goal-directed)
  - Interacts with other agents via the environment

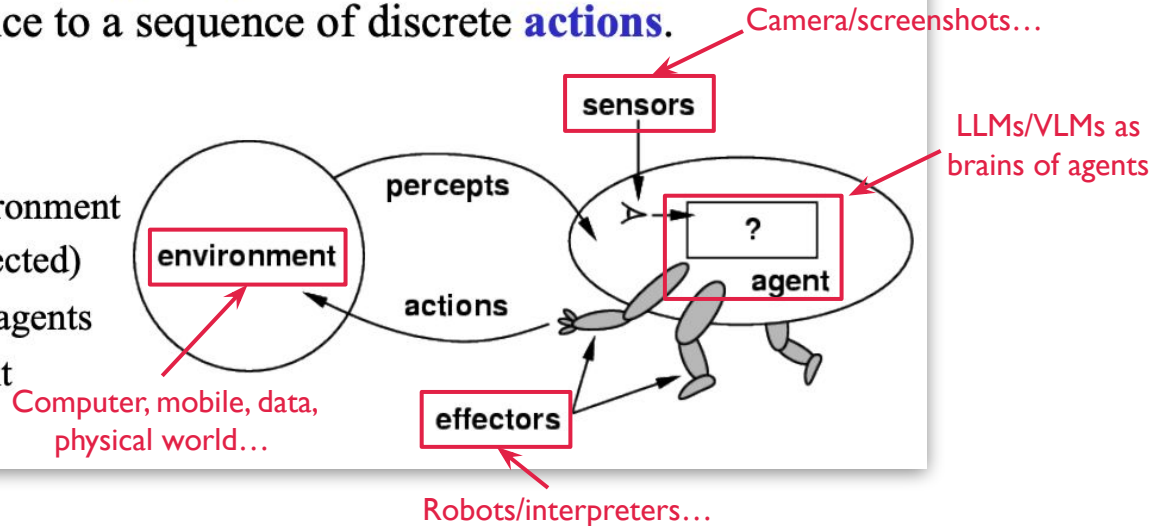


# What are sensors/percepts and effectors/actions?

- **Humans**
  - **Sensors:** Eyes (vision), ears (hearing), skin (touch), tongue (gustation), nose (olfaction), neuromuscular system (proprioception)
  - **Percepts:**
    - At the lowest level – electrical signals from these sensors
    - After preprocessing – objects in the visual field (location, textures, colors, ...), auditory streams (pitch, loudness, direction), ...
  - **Effectors:** limbs, digits, eyes, tongue, ...
  - **Actions:** lift a finger, turn left, walk, run, carry an object, ...
- **The Point:** percepts and actions need to be carefully defined, possibly at different levels of abstraction

# LLMs/VLMs as agents

- Definition: An **intelligent agent** perceives its environment via **sensors** and acts rationally upon that environment with its **effectors**.
- A discrete agent receives **percepts** one at a time, and maps this percept sequence to a sequence of discrete **actions**.
- Properties
  - Autonomous
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# LLMs/VLMs as agents

- Definition: An **intelligent agent** perceives its environment via **sensors** and acts rationally upon that environment with its **effectors**.

User

Stack the blocks on the empty bowl.

Large Language Model

Policy Code

```
block_names = detect_objects("blocks")
bowl_names = detect_objects("bowls")
for bowl_name in bowl_names:
    if is_empty(bowl_name):
        empty_bowl = bowl_name
        break
objs_to_stack = [empty_bowl] + block_names
stack_objects(objs_to_stack)

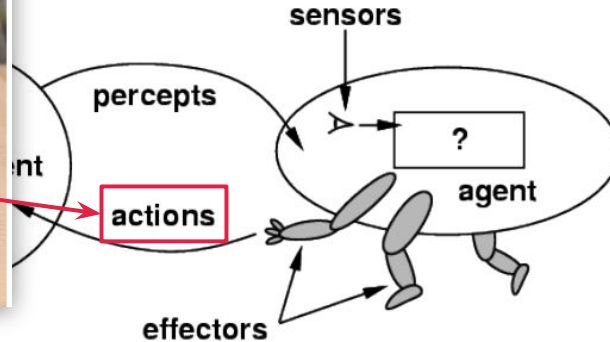
def is_empty(name):
    # ...

def stack_objects(obj_names):
    n_objs = len(obj_names)
    for i in range(n_objs - 1):
        obj0 = obj_names[i + 1]
        obj1 = obj_names[i]
        pick_place(obj0, obj1)
```

Perception APIs  
Control APIs

Robotic physical world

one at a time, and maps of discrete **actions**.

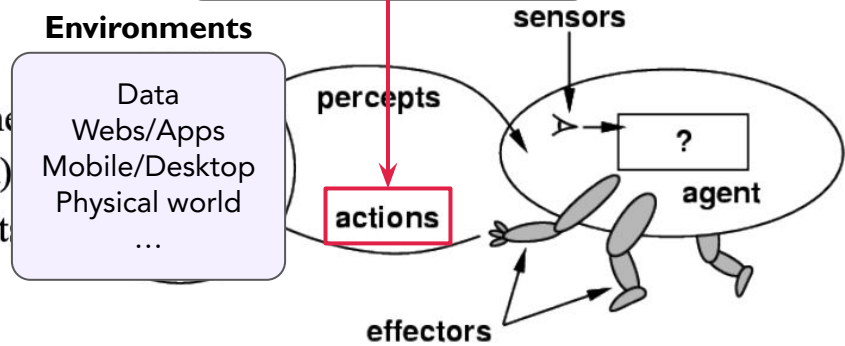


# LLMs/VLMs as agents

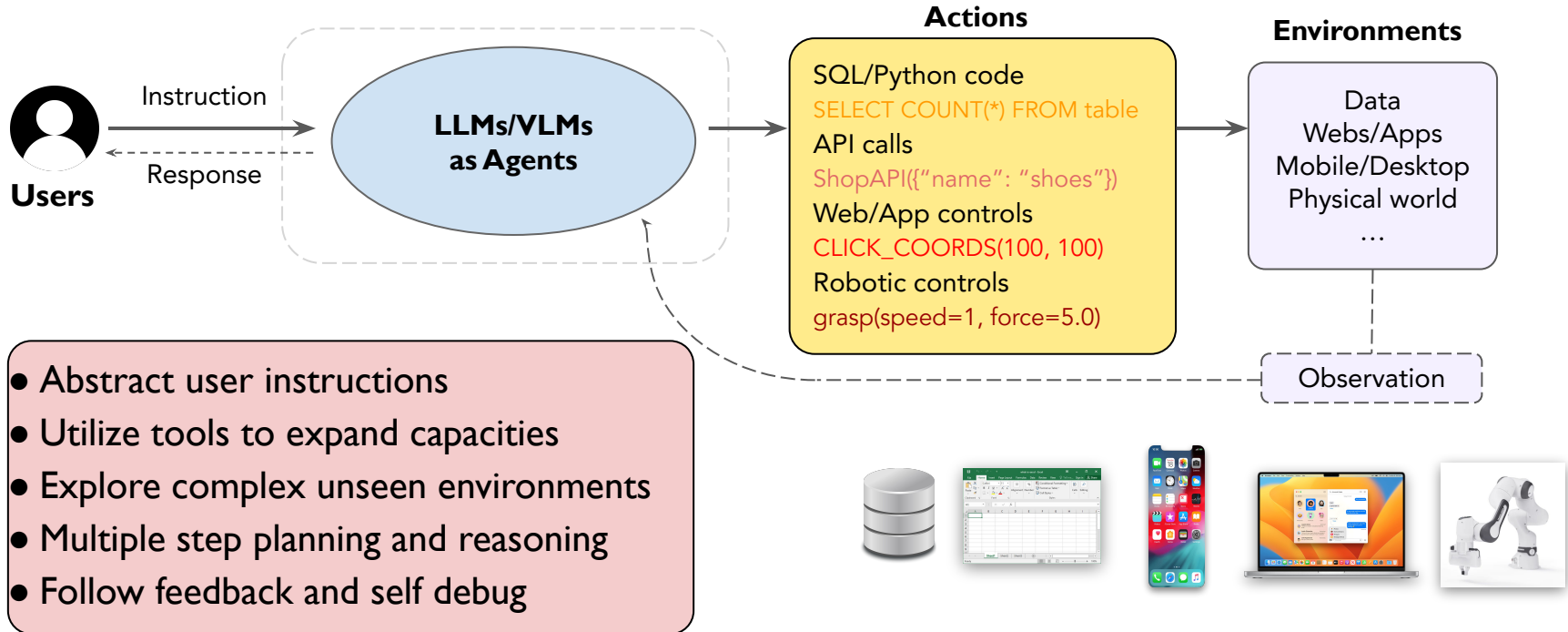
- Definition: An **intelligent agent** interacts with its environment via **sensors** and acts rationally using its **effectors**.
- A discrete agent receives **percepts** from the environment and maps this percept sequence to a sequence of **actions**.
- Properties
  - Autonomous
  - Reactive to the environment
  - Pro-active (goal-directed)
  - Interacts with other agents via the environment

**Actions**

```
SQL/Python code
SELECT COUNT(*) FROM table
API calls
ShopAPI({"name": "shoes"})
Web/App controls
CLICK_COORDS(100, 100)
Robotic controls
grasp(speed=1, force=5.0)
```



# LLMs/VLMs as agents



# Why LLMs/VLMs as agents?

## Current popular interfaces

```
SELECT T2.name, T2.budget
FROM instructor as T1 JOIN department as
T2 ON T1.department_id = T2.id
GROUP BY T1.department_id
HAVING avg(T1.salary) >
(SELECT avg(salary) FROM instructor)
```

### 1. Programming languages



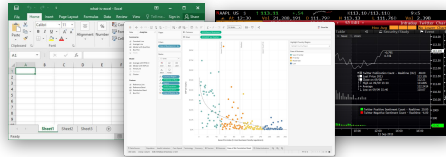
Users



### Digital world

Data  
Webs/Apps  
Mobile/Desktop  
...

### 2. Graphical user interfaces



# Why LLMs/VLMs as agents?

## Problems with current popular interfaces

 Hard to learn

```
HAVING avg(<!.salary!> <!  
(SELECT avg(salary) FROM instructor)
```

### 1. Programming languages



### Digital world

Data  
Webs/Apps  
Mobile/Desktop  
...

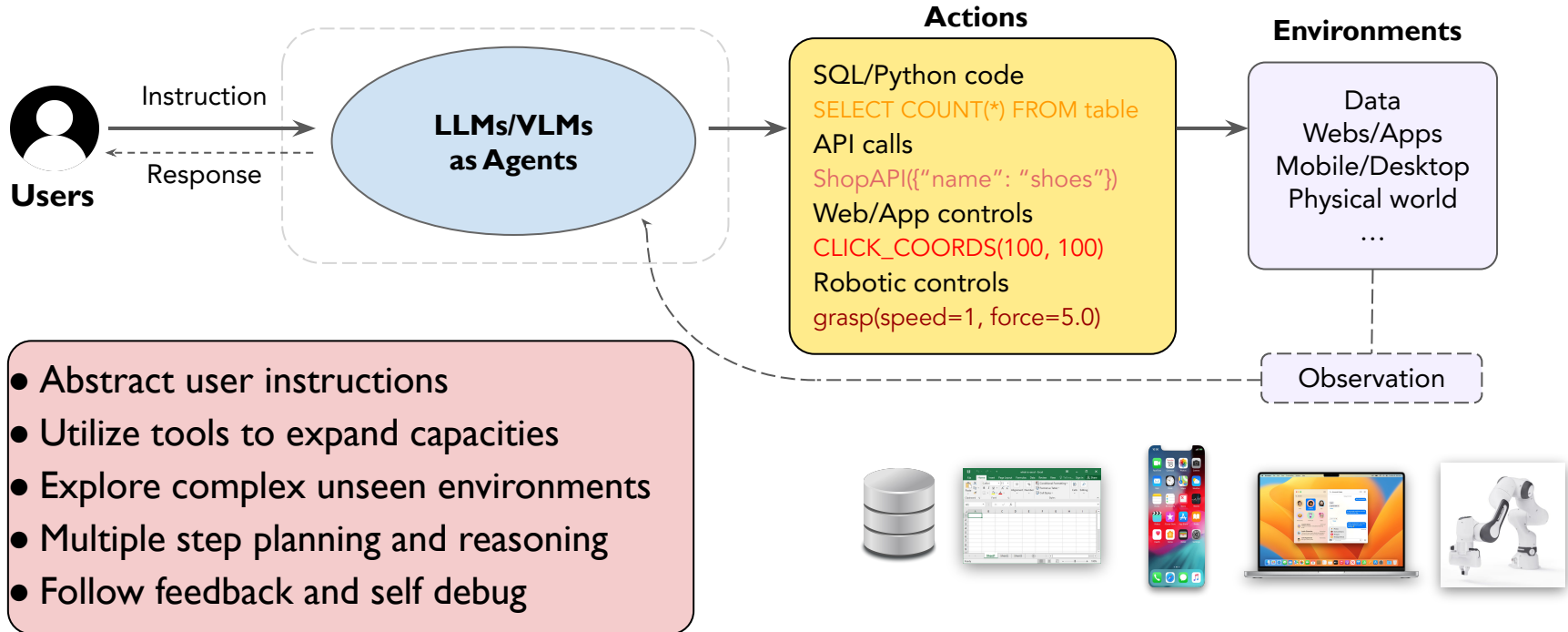
### 2. Graphical user interfaces

 Complex to use



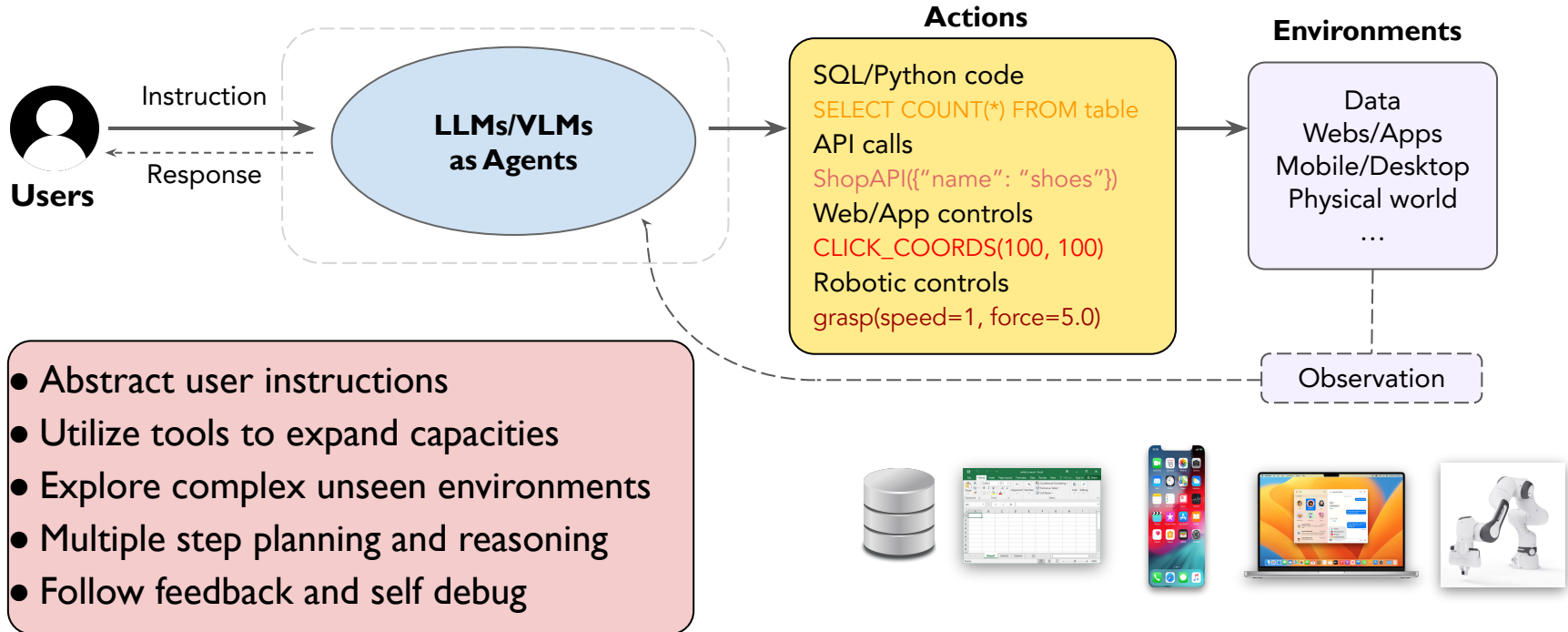
# Why LLMs/VLMs as agents?

LLMs/VLMs as agents enable users to interact with environments through natural language, making the process more intuitive and accessible.



# LLMs/VLMs as agents

Key research direction: transforming (“grounding”) language instructions into code or actions executable in real-world environments



# OSWorld: Benchmarking Multimodal Agents for Open-Ended Tasks in Real Computer Environments

Tianbao Xie<sup>1</sup>, Danyang Zhang<sup>1</sup>, Jixuan Chen<sup>1</sup>, Xiaochuan Li<sup>1</sup>,  
Siheng Zhao<sup>1</sup>, Ruisheng Cao<sup>1</sup>, Toh Jing Hua<sup>1</sup>, Zhoujun Cheng<sup>1</sup>, Dongchan Shin<sup>1</sup>, Fangyu Lei<sup>1</sup>, Yitao Liu<sup>1</sup>,  
Yiheng Xu<sup>1</sup>, Shuyan Zhou<sup>3</sup>, Silvio Savarese<sup>2</sup>, Caiming Xiong<sup>2</sup>, Victor Zhong<sup>4</sup>, Tao Yu<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The University of Hong Kong, <sup>2</sup>Salesforce Research, <sup>3</sup>Carnegie Mellon University, <sup>4</sup>University of Waterloo

 Paper

 Code

 Data

 Discord

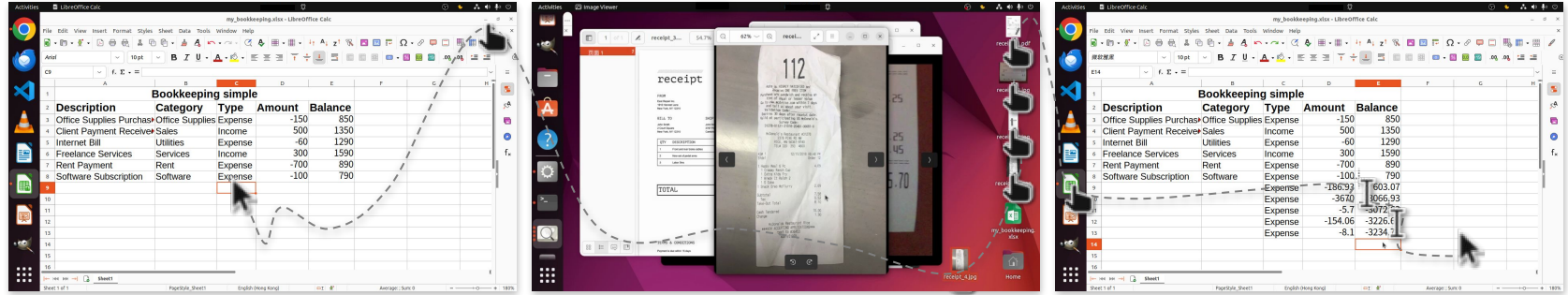
 Data Viewer

Project website: <https://os-world.github.io>

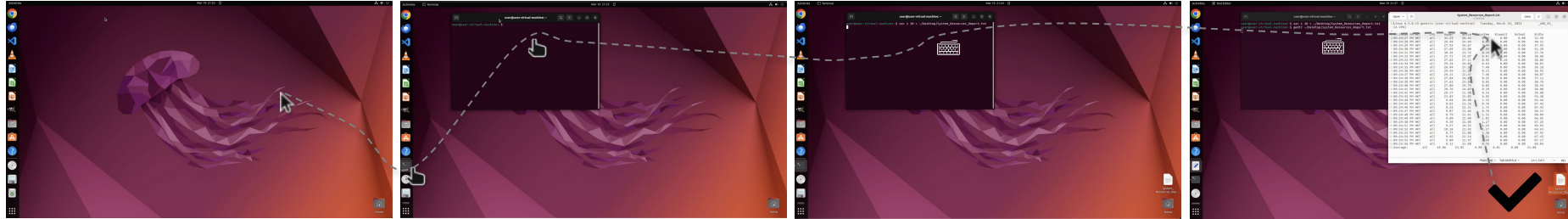


# OSWorld task examples

Task instruction 1: Update the bookkeeping sheet with my recent transactions over the past few days in the provided folder.



Task Instruction 2: monitor the system CPU for 30s and output the results



`pyautogui.click(terminal_x, terminal_y)`

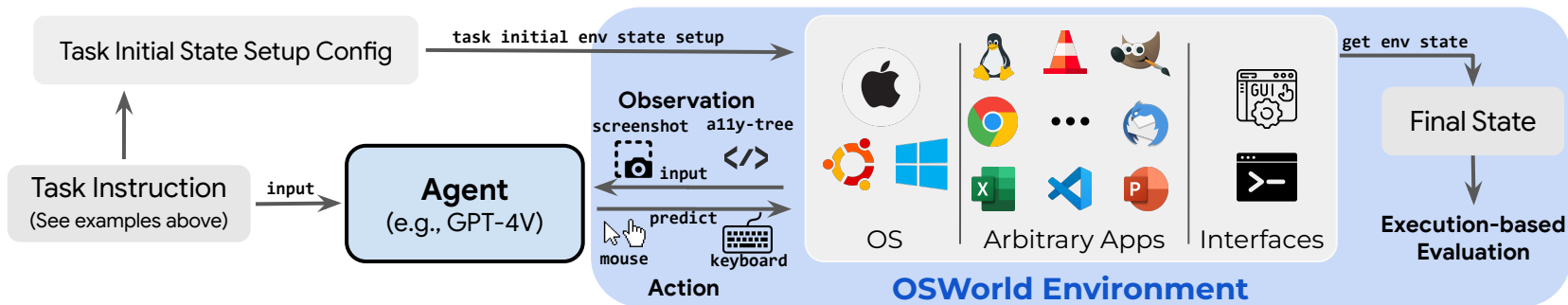
`pyautogui.click(focus_x, focus_y)`

`pyautogui.typewrite('sar | 30 > ...', interval=0.5)`

Done

# OSWorld agent task definition

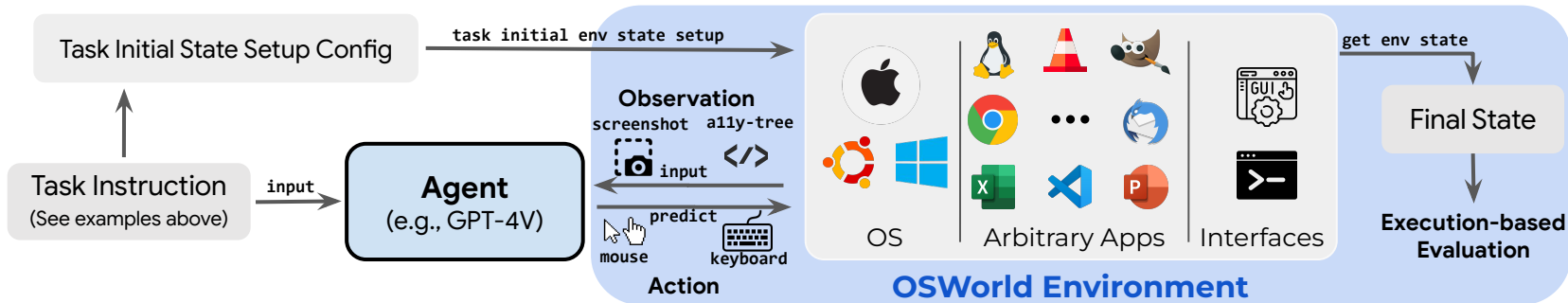
An autonomous digital agent task can be formalized as a partially observable Markov decision process (POMDP)  $(\mathcal{S}, \mathcal{O}, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{T}, \mathcal{R})$  with state space  $\mathcal{S}$ , observation space  $\mathcal{O}$  (§2.3, including natural language  $\mathcal{I}$ ), action space  $\mathcal{A}$  (§2.4), transition function  $\mathcal{T} : \mathcal{S} \times \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathcal{S}$ , and reward function  $\mathcal{R} : \mathcal{S} \times \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ . Given current observation  $o_t \in \mathcal{O}$  (a natural language instruction observation and a screenshot observation (e.g., computer screenshot), ally tree, or their combination according to facilities available), an agent generates executable action  $a_t \in \mathcal{A}$  (e.g., clicking on the certain pixel of the screen — `.click(300, 540, button='right')`, press key combination — `.hotkey('ctrl', 'alt', 't')`), which results in a new state  $s_{t+1} \in \mathcal{S}$  (e.g., current Desktop environment) and a new partial observation  $o_{t+1} \in \mathcal{O}$  (e.g., current screenshot). The interaction loop repeats until an action that marks termination (whether the agent decides it has succeeded or failed) is generated or the agent reaches the max number of steps. In this version of OSWORLD, we implement a execution-based reward function  $\mathcal{R} : \mathcal{S} \times \mathcal{A} \rightarrow [0, 1]$  (§2.2.3). The reward function awards a value of 1 or a positive



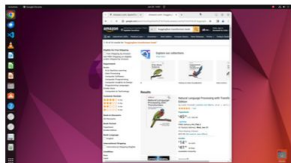
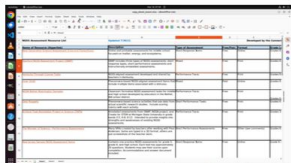
# OSWorld agent task action space

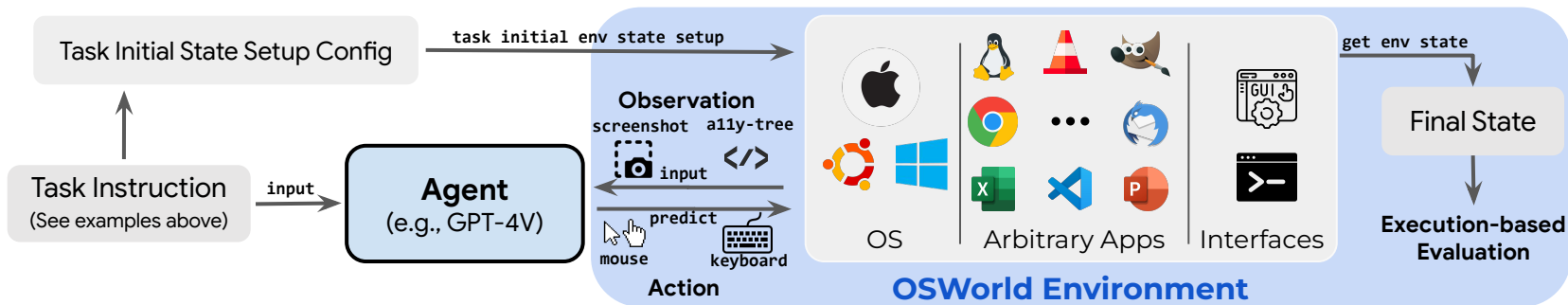
Some examples of the mouse and keyboard actions

Function	Description
<code>moveTo(x, y)</code>	Moves the mouse to the specified coordinates.
<code>click(x, y)</code>	Clicks at the specified coordinates.
<code>write('text')</code>	Types the specified text at the current cursor location.
<code>press('enter')</code>	Presses the Enter key.
<code>hotkey('ctrl', 'c')</code>	Performs the Ctrl+C hotkey combination (copy).
<code>scroll(200)</code>	Scrolls up by 200 units.
<code>scroll(-200)</code>	Scrolls down by 200 units.
<code>dragTo(x, y)</code>	Drags the mouse to the specified coordinates.
<code>keyDown('shift')</code>	Holds down the Shift key.
<code>keyUp('shift')</code>	Releases the Shift key.
WAIT	Agent decides it should wait.
FAIL	Agent decides the task is infeasible.
DONE	Agent decides the task is finished.



# OSWorld agent task evaluation

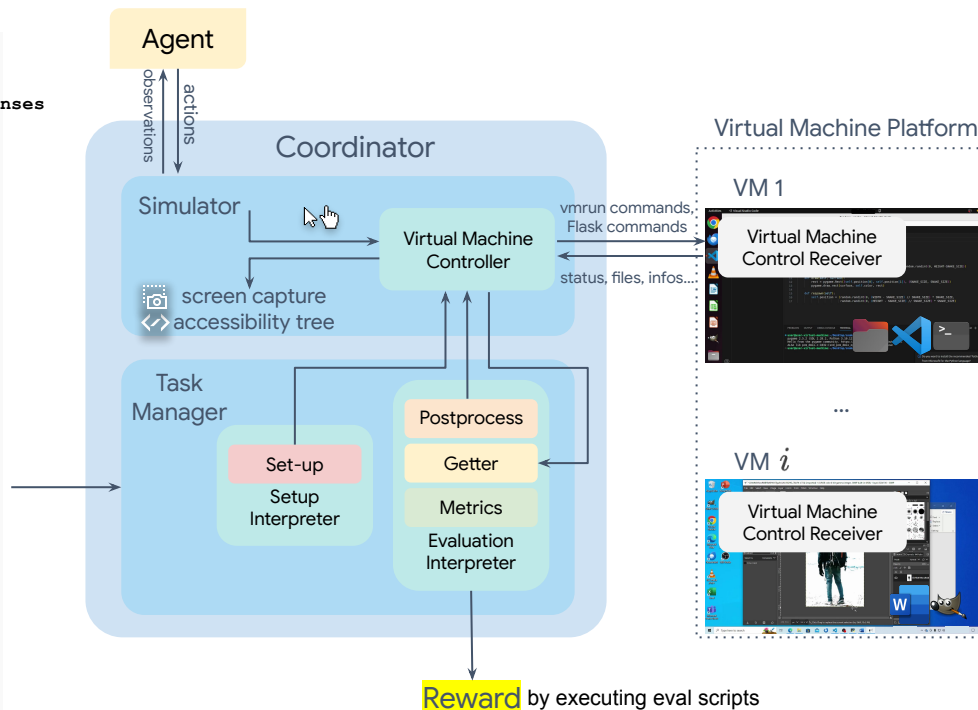
Initial State	Task Instruction	Evaluation Script (Simplified)
	<i>Can you help me clean up my computer by getting rid of all the tracking things that Amazon might have saved?</i>	<pre>cookie_data = get_cookie_data(env) rule = {"type": "domains", "domains": [".amazon.com"]} is_cookie_deleted(cookie_data, rule)</pre>
	<i>Rename "Sheet 1" to "LARS Resources". Then make a copy of it. Place the copy before "Sheet 2" and rename it by appending a suffix "(Backup)", ...</i>	<pre>result = get_file(env) expected = get_file(cloud) rules = [{"type": "sheet_name"}, {"type": "sheet_data", "sheet_idx0": 0, "sheet_idx1": 1}...] compare_table(result, expected, rules)</pre>



# OSWorld environment

## Config

```
{ "instruction": "Please update my bookkeeping sheet with the recent transactions from the provided folder, detailing my expenses over the past few days.", "config": [{"type": "download", "parameters": {"files": [{"path": "/home/user/Desktop/my_bookkeeping.xlsx", "url": "https://drive.google.com/uc?id=xxxx"}, {"path": "/home/user/Desktop/receipt_0.jpeg", "url": "https://drive.google.com/uc?id=xxxx"}]}], [{"type": "open", "parameters": {"path": "/home/user/Desktop/my_bookkeeping.xlsx"}], "evaluator": {"postconfig": [{"type": "activate_window", "parameters": {"window_name": "my_bookkeeping.xlsx - LibreOffice Calc"}]}], [{"type": "vm file", "path": "/home/user/Desktop/my_bookkeeping.xlsx", "dest": "my_bookkeeping.xlsx"}, {"type": "cloud file", "path": "https://drive.google.com/uc?id=xxx", "dest": "my_bookkeeping_gold.xlsx"}], "func": "compare_table", "options": {"rules": [{"type": "sheet_fuzzy", "sheet_idx0": "RNSheet1", "sheet_idx1": "ENSheet1", "rules": [{"range": ["A1:A8", ...]}]}]}]}
```



# OSWorld benchmark dataset

Table 3: Key statistics in OSWORLD. The “Supp. tasks” refers to the Windows-based tasks, that could only be used after activation due to copyright restrictions.

Statistic	Number
Total tasks (Ubuntu)	369 (100%)
- Multi-App Workflow	101 (27.4%)
- Single-App	268 (72.6%)
- Integrated	84 (22.8%)
- Infeasible	30 (8.1%)
Supp. tasks (Windows)	43
Initial States	302
Eval. Scripts	134

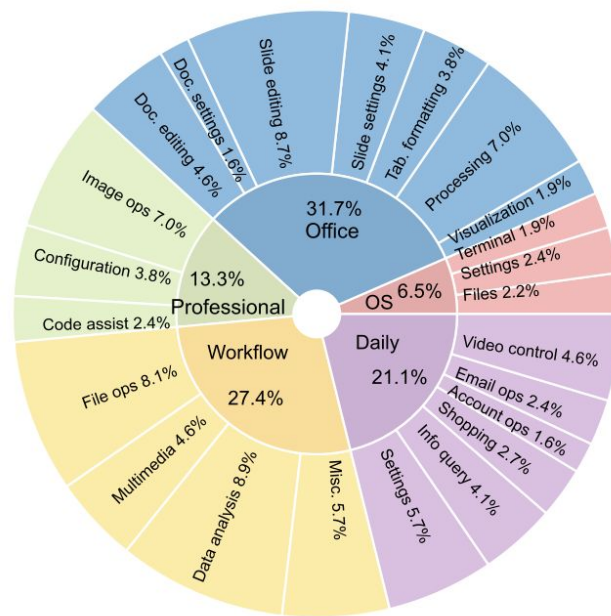


Figure 3: Distribution of task instructions in OSWORLD based on the app domains and operation types to showcase the content intuitively.

# OSWorld benchmark dataset

	Size	Executable Env.?	Environment Scalability?	Multimodal Support?	Cross-App?	Intermediate Init. State?	# Exec.-based Eval. Func.
AGENTBENCH [31]	1091	Heterogeneous	✗	✗	✗	✗	7
INTERCODE [52]	1350	Code	✗	✗	✗	✗	3
GAIA [34]	466	-	-	✗	✗	✗	0
MINIWOB++ [29]	104	Web	✗	✓	✗	✗	104
WEBSHOP [53]	12k	Web	✗	✓	✗	✗	1
MIND2WEB [9]	2350	-	-	✓	✗	✓	0
WEBARENA [59]	812	Web	✗	✓	✗	✗	5
VWEBARENA [21]	910	Web	✗	✓	✗	✗	6
WEBLINUX [32]	2337	-	-	✓	✗	✓	0
PIXELHELP [25]	187	-	-	✓	✗	✗	0
METAGUI [43]	1125	-	-	✓	✗	✗	0
WIKIHOW [56]	150	Mobile	✗	✓	✗	✗	16
AITW [38]	30k	-	-	✓	✗	✓	0
ASSISTGUI [12]	100	-	✗	✓	✗	✓	2
OMNIACT [20]	9802	-	-	✓	✗	✓	0
<b>OSWORLD</b>	<b>369</b>	<b>Computer</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>134</b>

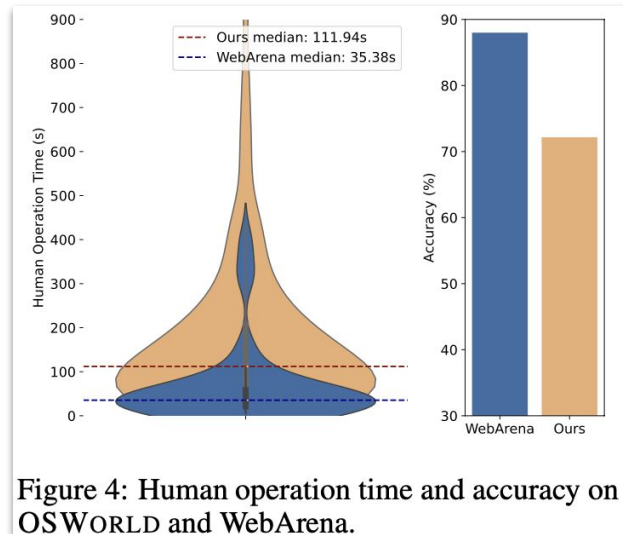


Figure 4: Human operation time and accuracy on OSWORLD and WebArena.

# LLM/VLM agent baselines

- LLMs and VLMs from Mixtral and CogAgent (open-source), and GPT4, Gemini-pro, and Claude-3 (closed-source) as agents.
- Prompt details (see right - much more complex prompting pipelines)
- Temperature of 1.0 and top-p of 0.9
- Providing the most recent 3 observations and actions as history context for each step.

```
You are an agent which follow my instruction and perform desktop computer
↳ tasks as instructed.
You have good knowledge of computer and good internet connection and assume
↳ your code will run on a computer for controlling the mouse and keyboard.
For each step, you will get an observation of an image, which is the
↳ screenshot of the computer screen and you will predict the action of the
↳ computer based on the image.
```

```
You are required to use `pyautogui` to perform the action grounded to the
↳ observation, but DONOT use the `pyautogui.locateCenterOnScreen` function
↳ to locate the element you want to operate with since we have no image of
↳ the element you want to operate with. DONOT USE `pyautogui.screenshot()`
↳ to make screenshot.
```

```
Return one line or multiple lines of python code to perform the action each
↳ time, be time efficient. When predicting multiple lines of code, make
↳ some small sleep like `time.sleep(0.5);` interval so that the machine
↳ could take; Each time you need to predict a complete code, no variables
↳ or function can be shared from history
```

```
You need to to specify the coordinates of by yourself based on your
↳ observation of current observation, but you should be careful to ensure
↳ that the coordinates are correct.
```

```
You ONLY need to return the code inside a code block, like this:
```

```
```python
# your code here
```
```

```
Specially, it is also allowed to return the following special code:
```

```
When you think you have to wait for some time, return ```WAIT```;
When you think the task can not be done, return ```FAIL``` , don't easily say
↳ ```FAIL``` , try your best to do the task;
When you think the task is done, return ```DONE```.
```

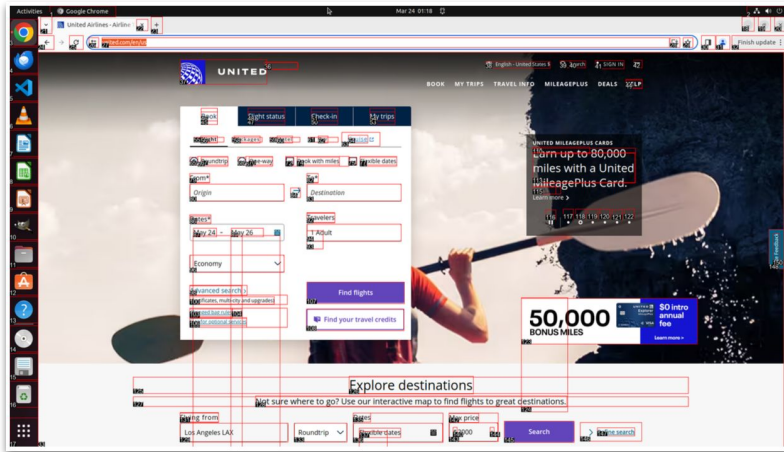
```
My computer's password is 'password', feel free to use it when you need sudo
↳ rights.
```

```
First give the current screenshot and previous things we did a short
↳ reflection, then RETURN ME THE CODE OR SPECIAL CODE I ASKED FOR. NEVER
↳ EVER RETURN ME ANYTHING ELSE.
```



# Input settings for LLM/VLM agent baselines

- Accessibility tree
- Screenshot
- Screenshot + accessibility tree
- Set-of-Marks



Set-of-Marks

```
This XML file does not appear to have any style information associated with it. The document tree is shown below.
<div class="form" data-bbox="55 457 463 875">
  <input type="text" value="Origin" data-bbox="65 625 105 645"/>
  <input type="text" value="Destination" data-bbox="115 625 155 645"/>
  <input type="text" value="May 24 - May 26" data-bbox="165 625 205 645"/>
  <input type="text" value="Economy" data-bbox="215 625 255 645"/>
  <input type="button" value="Find flights" data-bbox="265 625 305 645"/>
  <input type="button" value="Find your travel credits" data-bbox="315 625 355 645"/>
  <div data-bbox="110 500 450 580">
    <h3 data-bbox="110 500 150 520>Earn up to 80,000 miles with a United MileagePlus Card</h3>
    <p data-bbox="110 520 450 580">...</p>
  </div>
  <div data-bbox="330 730 450 780">
    <h3 data-bbox="330 730 450 750>50,000 BONUS MILES</h3>
    <p data-bbox="330 750 450 780">...</p>
  </div>
  <div data-bbox="230 800 450 830">
    <h3 data-bbox="230 800 300 820>Explore destinations</h3>
    <p data-bbox="230 820 450 830">...</p>
  </div>
  <div data-bbox="110 850 450 875">
    <input type="text" value="Los Angeles LAX" data-bbox="110 850 150 875"/>
    <input type="text" value="Roundtrip" data-bbox="160 850 200 875"/>
    <input type="text" value="New York" data-bbox="210 850 250 875"/>
    <input type="text" value="$1,200" data-bbox="260 850 300 875"/>
    <input type="button" value="Search" data-bbox="310 850 350 875"/>
  </div>
</div>
```

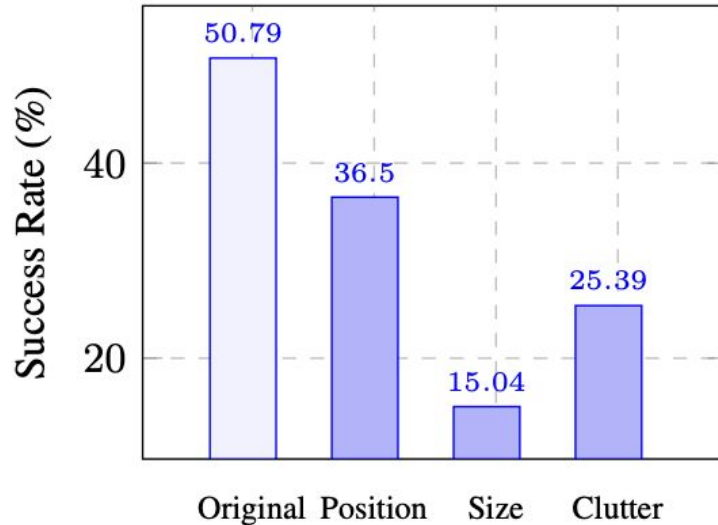
Accessibility tree

# Results of LLM/VLM agent baselines

Inputs	Model	Success Rate (↑)					
		OS	Office	Daily	Profess.	Workflow	Overall
A11y tree	Mixtral-8x7B	12.5%	1.01%	4.79%	6.12%	0.09%	2.98%
	GPT-3.5	4.17%	4.43%	2.71%	0.00%	1.62%	2.69%
	Gemini-Pro	4.17%	1.71%	3.99%	4.08%	0.63%	2.37%
	GPT-4	20.83%	3.58%	25.64%	26.53%	2.97%	<b>12.24%</b>
Screenshot	CogAgent	4.17%	0.85%	2.71%	0.00%	0.00%	1.11%
	Gemini-ProV	8.33%	3.58%	6.55%	16.33%	2.08%	5.80%
	GPT-4V	12.5%	1.86%	7.58%	4.08%	6.04%	5.26%
	Claude-3-Opus	4.17%	1.87%	2.71%	2.04%	2.61%	2.42%
Screenshot + A11y tree	CogAgent	4.17%	0.85%	2.71%	0.62%	0.09%	1.32%
	Gemini-ProV	4.17%	4.43%	6.55%	0.00%	1.52%	3.48%
	GPT-4V	16.66%	6.99%	24.50%	18.37%	4.64%	<b>12.17%</b>
	Claude-3-Opus	12.5%	3.57%	5.27%	8.16%	1.00%	4.41%
Set-of-Mark	CogAgent	4.17%	0.00%	2.71%	0.00%	0.53%	0.99%
	Gemini-ProV	4.17%	1.01%	1.42%	0.00%	0.63%	1.06%
	GPT-4V	8.33%	8.55%	22.84%	14.28%	<b>6.57%</b>	11.77%
	Claude-3-Opus	12.5%	2.72%	14.24%	6.12%	4.49%	6.72%
Human Performance		75.00%	71.79%	70.51%	73.47%	73.27%	72.36%

# Analysis of LLM/VLM agent baselines

- Analysis example 1: VLM agents struggle with perturbation of position and size of application windows and irrelevant information.
- See paper for more interesting analysis.

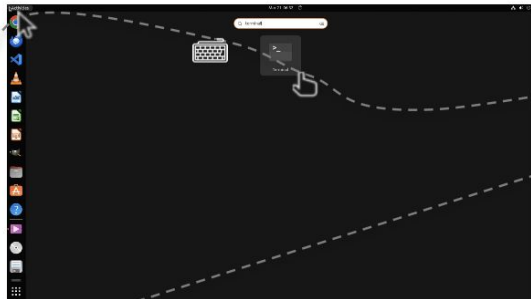


# Success case of LLM/VLM agent baselines

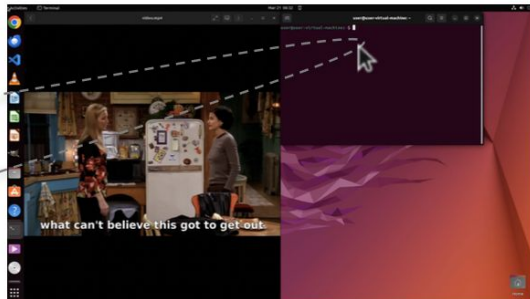
Task Instruction: I downloaded an episode of Friends to practice listening, but I don't know how to remove the subtitles. Please help me remove the subtitles from the video and export it as "subtitles.srt" and store it in the same directory as the video.



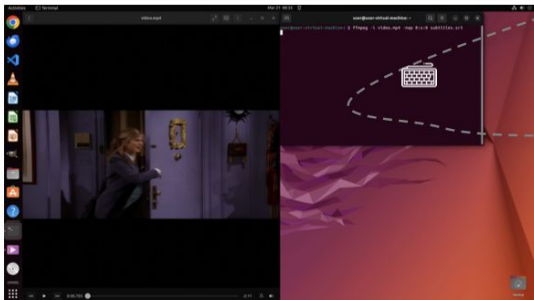
Step 1: `pyautogui.click(activities_x, activities_y)`



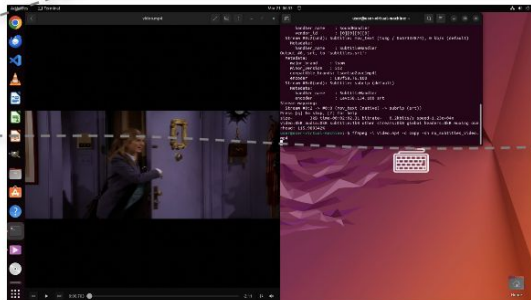
Step 2: `pyautogui.typewrite('terminal', interval=0.5)`



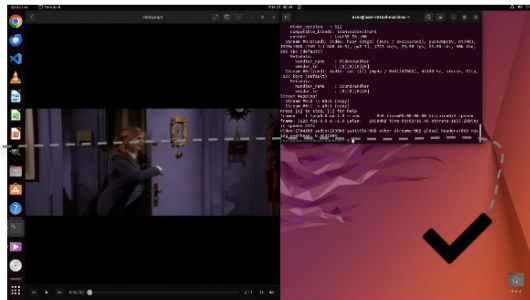
Step 3: `pyautogui.click(focus_x, focus_y)`



Step 4: `pyautogui.typewrite('ffmpeg -i video.mp4 -map 0:s:0 subtitles.srt', interval=0.5)`



Step 5: `pyautogui.typewrite('ffmpeg -i video.mp4 -c copy -sn no_subtitles_video.mp4', interval=0.5)`



Step 6: Done