

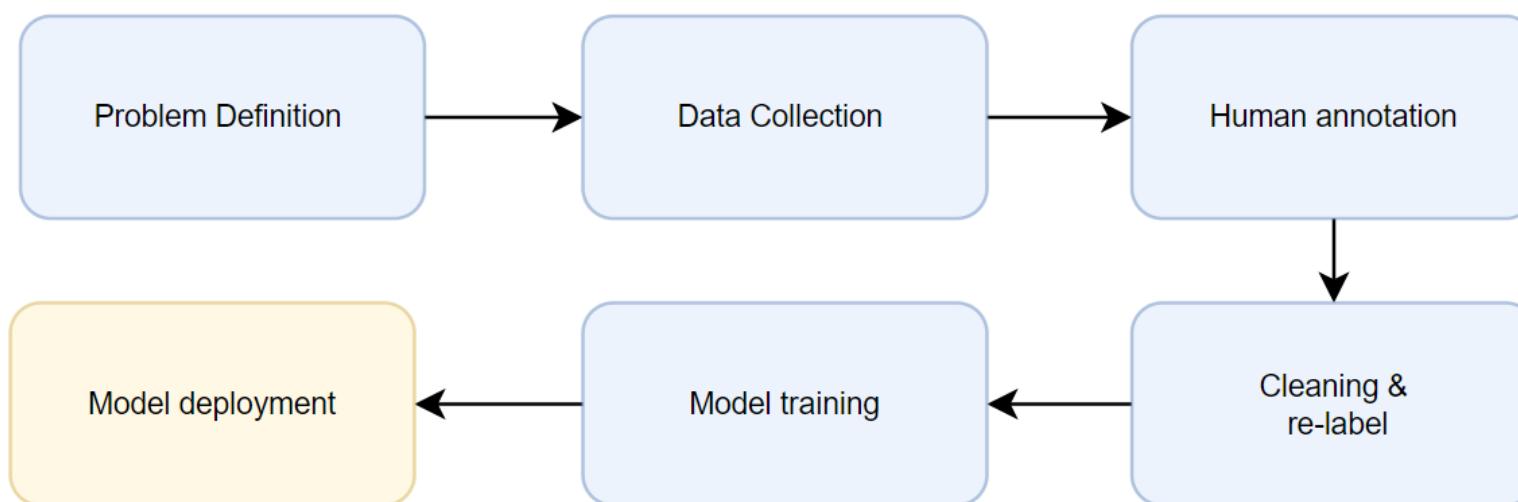
# A Meta-Learning Approach for Few-Shot Class Incremental Learning

*Li Gu*

*July 18, 2022 @CBG Canada*

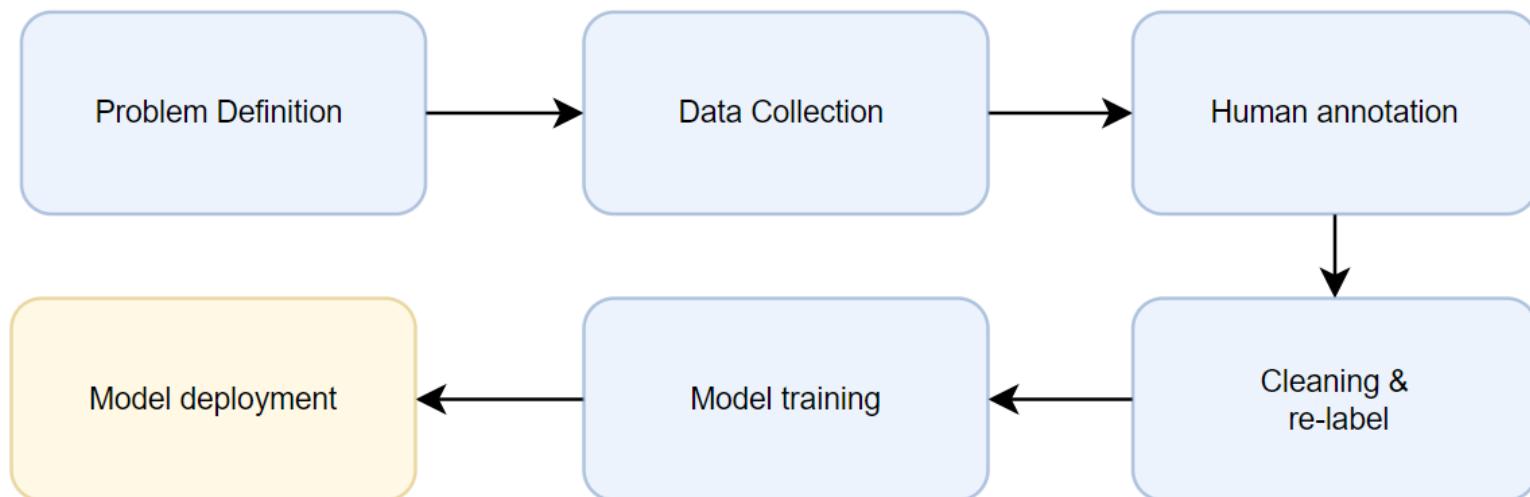
# Classic Machine Learning Pipeline

- Classic Machine learning works well **in a closed world**
- Fixed set of classes, lots of labeled data per class, balanced dataset

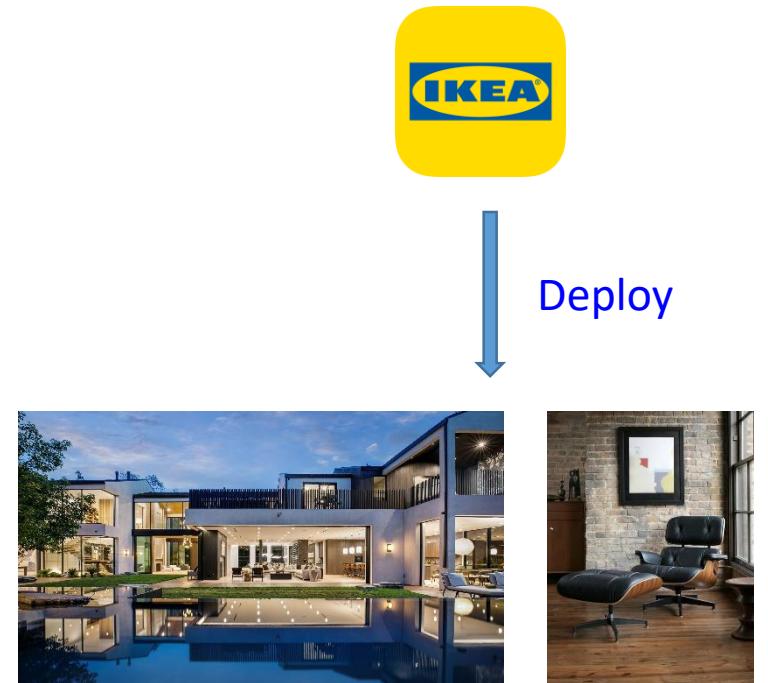


# Drawbacks of classic ML paradigm

Drawback 1: Lack of adaptation capabilities once deployed



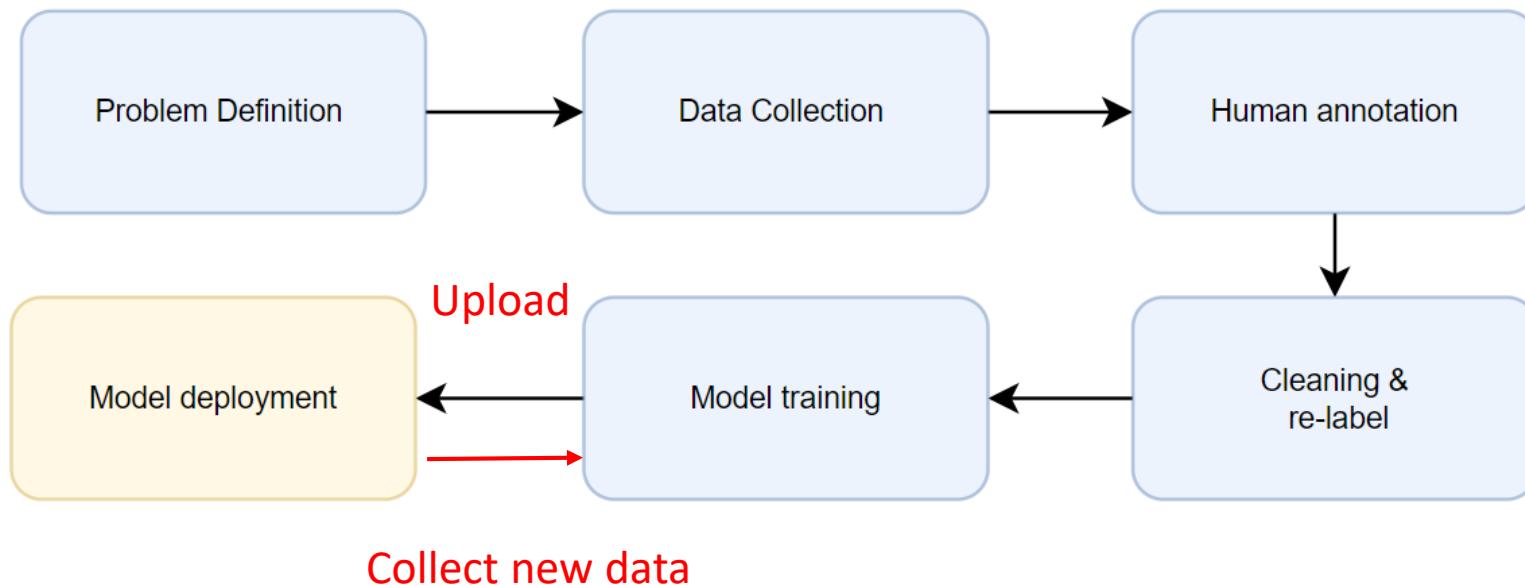
New concepts ?  
New environments ?



# Drawbacks of classic ML paradigm

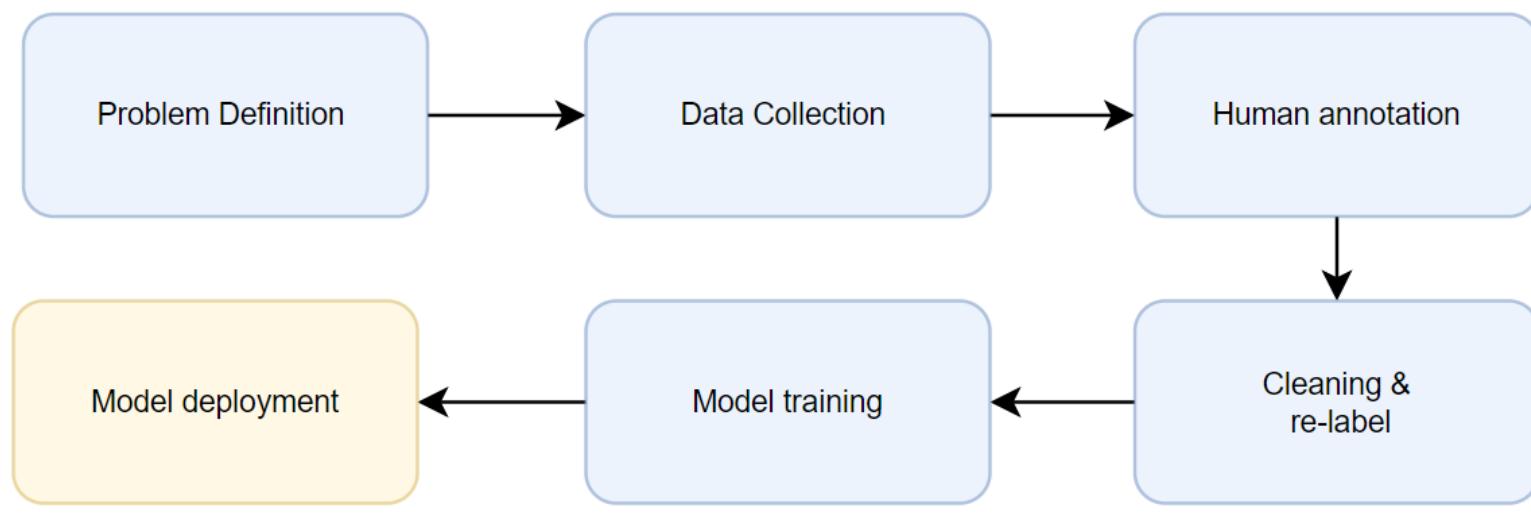
**Drawback 1:** Lack of adaptation capabilities once deployed

**Naïve Solution:** Keep collecting new data and re-train the model → Privacy-related regulations



# Drawbacks of classic ML paradigm

**Drawback 2:** Data Hungry. Resource Inefficiency if collecting all new data locally



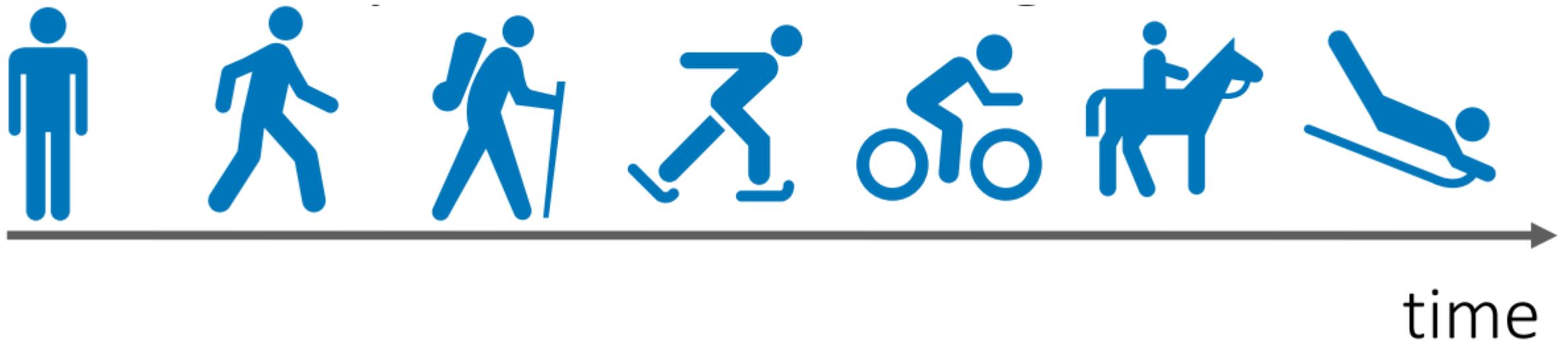
collect data locally

## Multi-sensor in self-driving car

- 50GB/s streaming data.
- ~30240 TB of data after only a week.
- Impossible to re-train from scratch and to adapt fast.

# Drawbacks of classic ML paradigm

**Drawback 3:** Humans can accumulate knowledge and learn in a dynamically changing environment



# What is Lifelong Learning / Continual Learning?

## Problem Definition

- Learn a sequence of task,  $T_1, T_2, \dots, T_N$ ... incrementally. Each task  $T_t$  has a small training dataset  $D_t = \{x_{t,i}, y_{t,i}\}_{i=1}^{n_t}$
- These small datasets may be of different types and from different domains
- At time step  $t$ , the learner can only access  $D_t$  instead of all datasets

# What is Lifelong Learning / Continual Learning?

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## Goal

- Accumulate the knowledge in dynamic environments across the lifetime
  - Learning of the new task  $T_{N+1}$  should not result in degradation of accuracy for previous  $N$  tasks.
- Transfer the accumulated knowledge to improve their performance on both previous and future tasks
  - Forward transfer → Enable fast adaptation

# Lifelong Learning is a popular research topic

← Thread



Timothée Lesort  
@TLesort

...

[0/N] Hi all, I have made a thread with of all continual learning papers accepted [@CVPR 2022](#). (I did not expect it to be that long when I started... N=45 😅)

I will be in person at CVPR2022 I hope to see you there. 😎

11:23 AM · May 26, 2022 · Twitter Web App



DEEPMIND IS HIRING A

## Continual Learning Research Engineer - London

## Avalanche: an End-to-End Library for Continual Learning

Powered by ContinualAI



Avalanche

powered by



ContinualAI

Avalanche is an *End-to-End Continual Learning Library* based on [PyTorch](#), born within [ContinualAI](#) with the unique goal of providing a **shared** and **collaborative** open-source (MIT licensed) **codebase** for fast prototyping, training and *reproducible evaluation* of continual learning algorithms.

## Continual Learning: On Machines that can Learn Continually

A University of Pisa, ContinualAI and AIDA Doctoral Academy Course



UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA



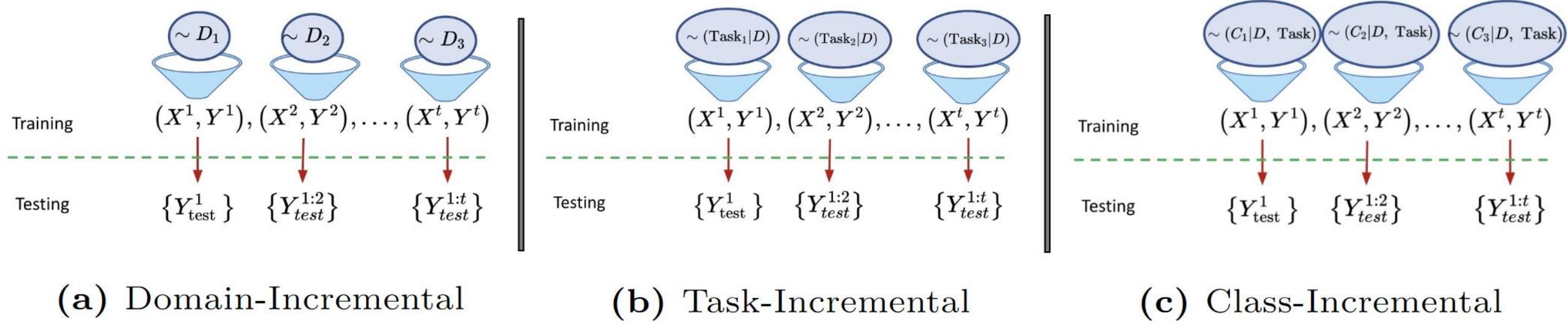
ContinualAI



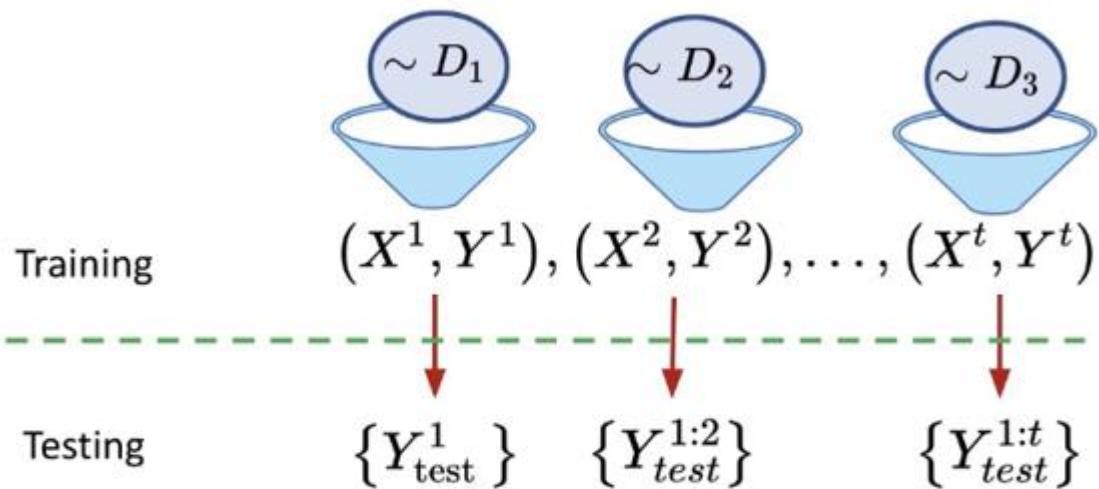
AIDA

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE  
DOCTORAL ACADEMY

# Three prominent scenarios in lifelong learning



# Three prominent scenarios in lifelong learning



**(a) Domain-Incremental**

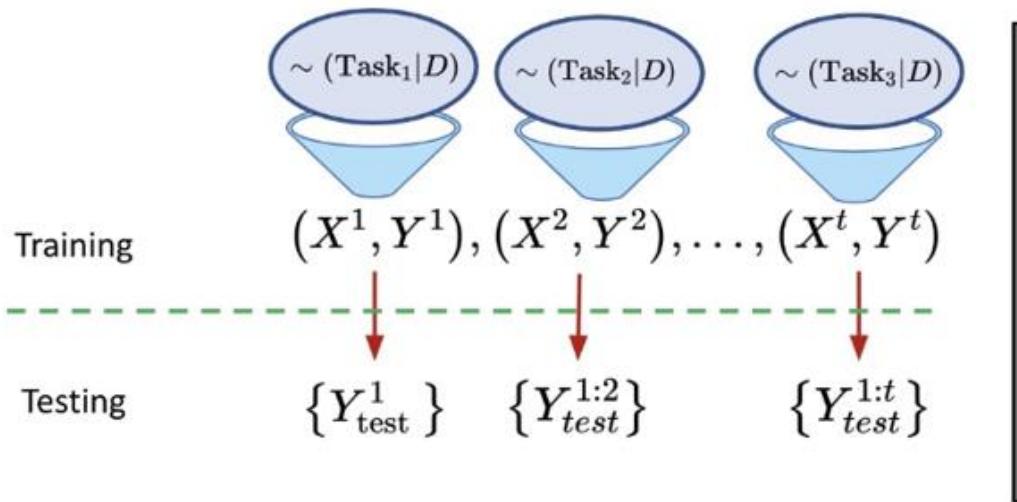
## Problem

- Recommend  $k$  courses from  $N$  candidates to a school

## Dataset

- Each task contains one specific student's data.
- Covariate shift across students. Only  $P(x)$  changes

# Three prominent scenarios in lifelong learning



(b) Task-Incremental

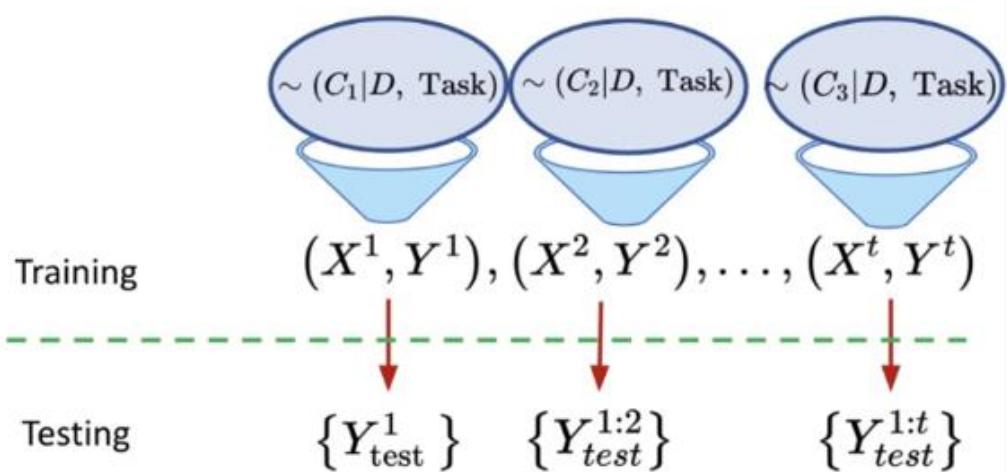
## Problem

- Learn to handle object detection, segmentation and depth prediction at the same time

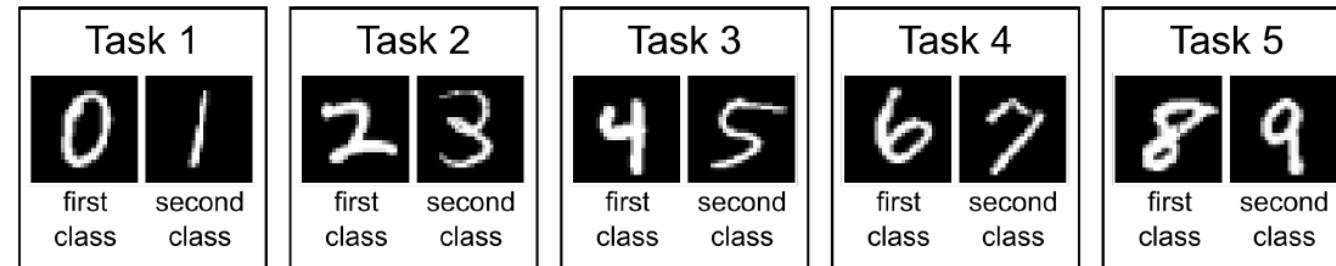
## Dataset

- Encounter those three tasks sequentially

# Three prominent scenarios in lifelong learning



**(c) Class-Incremental**



## Problem

- Learn to recognize all 10 digits

## Dataset

- Encounter non-overlapped classes sequentially during incremental learning

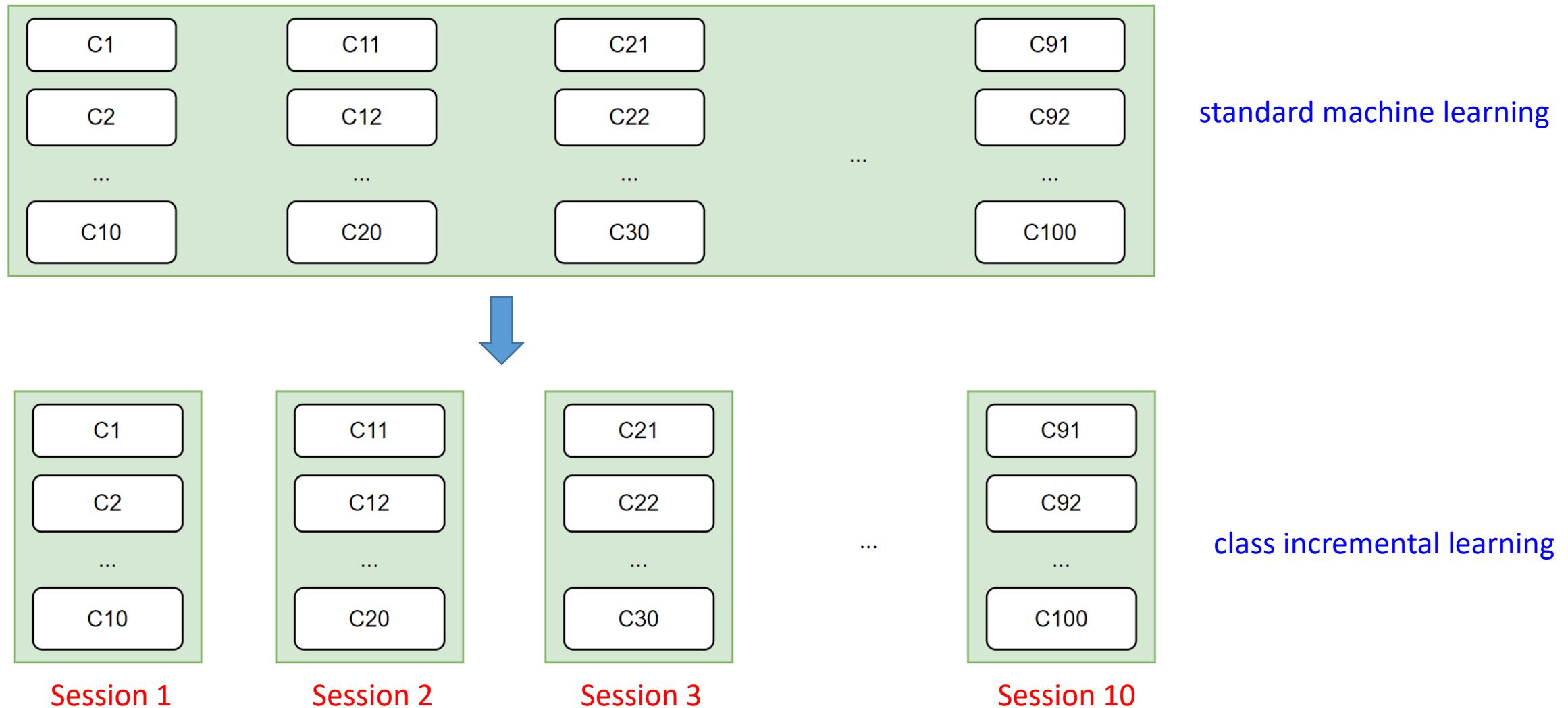
# An example of class incremental learning (CIL)



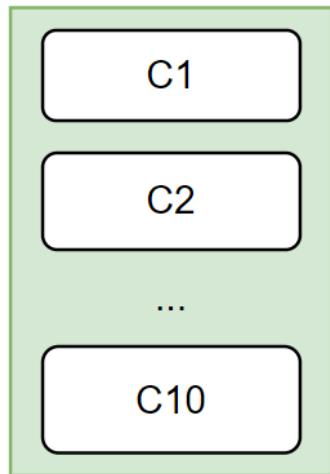
## CIFAR100 dataset

- 100 classes
- 500 examples per class

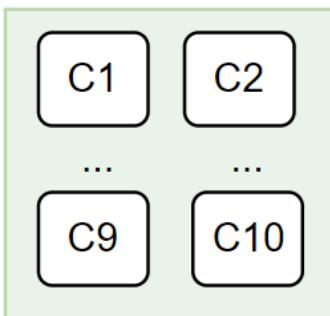
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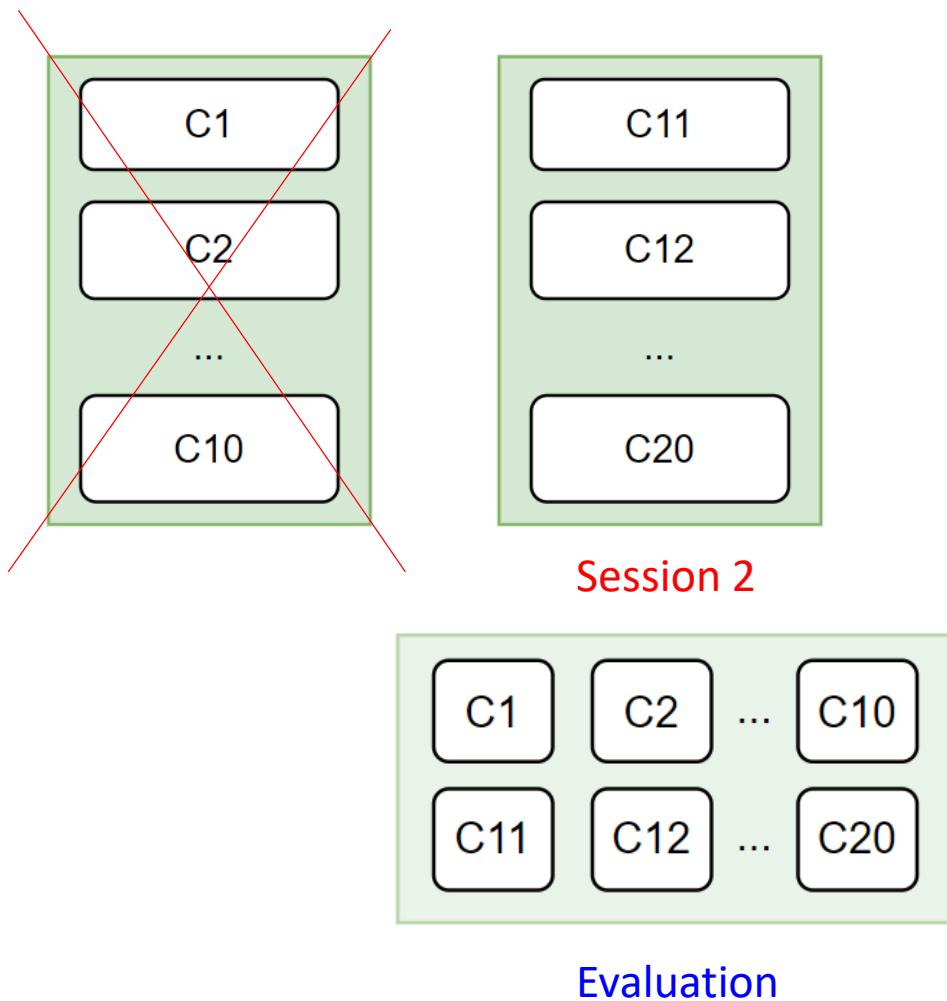


Session 1

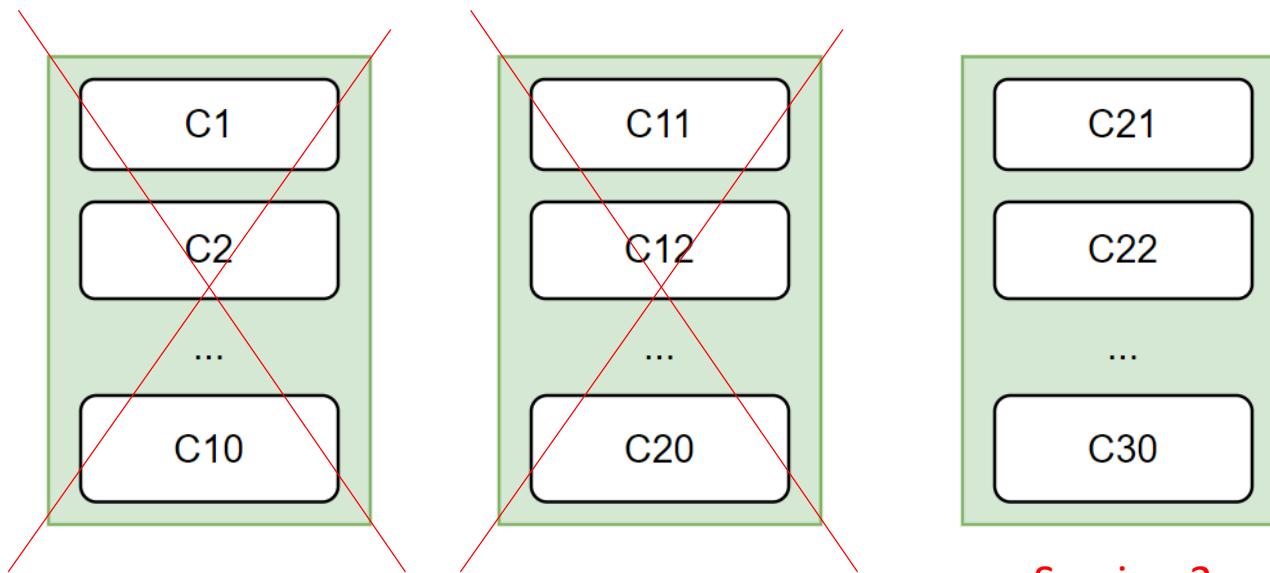


Evaluation

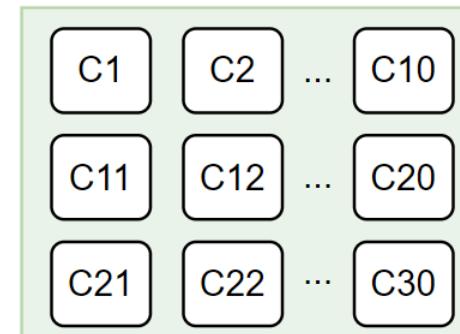
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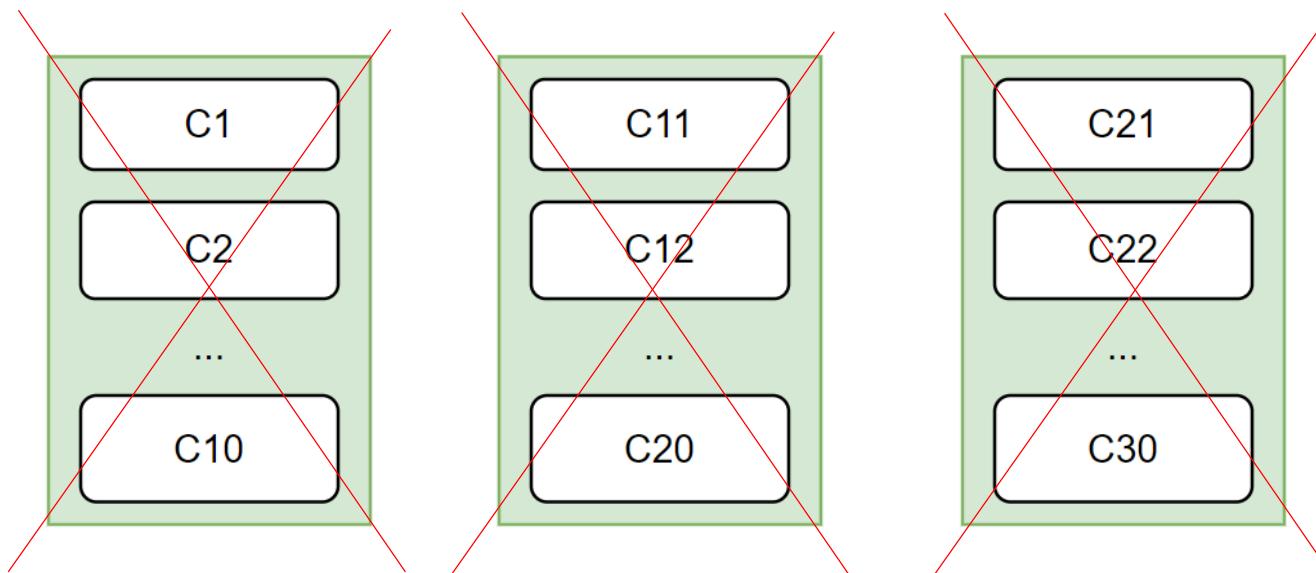


Session 3

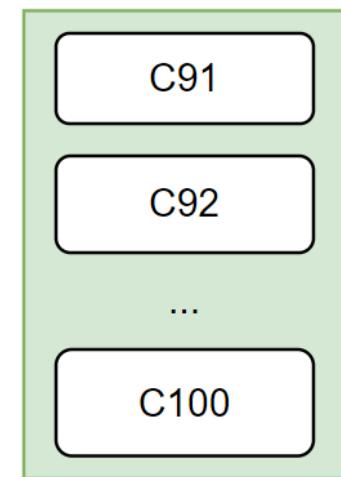


Evaluation

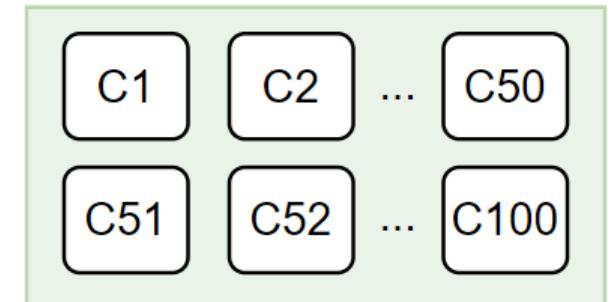
# An example of class incremental learning (CIL)



...



Session 10

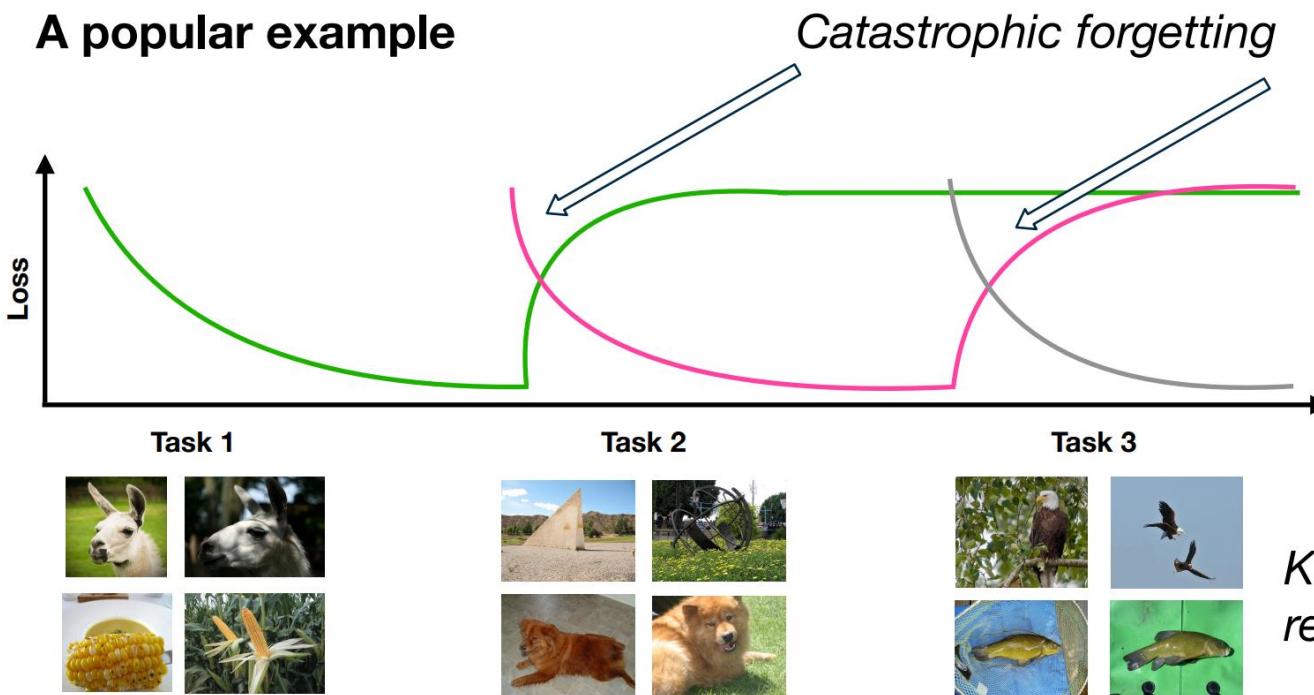


Evaluation

Can we apply NNs directly to class incremental learning ?

# Key Challenge: Catastrophic Forgetting

- **Forget** previously learned information upon learning new information
- Mostly due to Gradient Descent. **Assume the knowledge stored in NN's parameters**



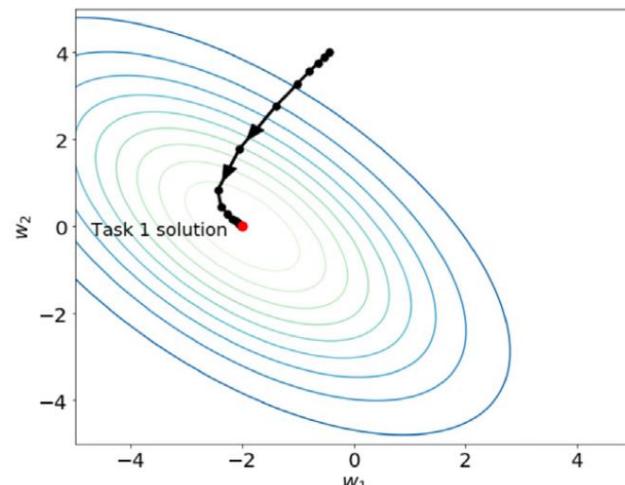
## Plasticity – Stability dilemma

- **Plasticity**: Learn new knowledge
- **Stability**: Not forget old knowledge

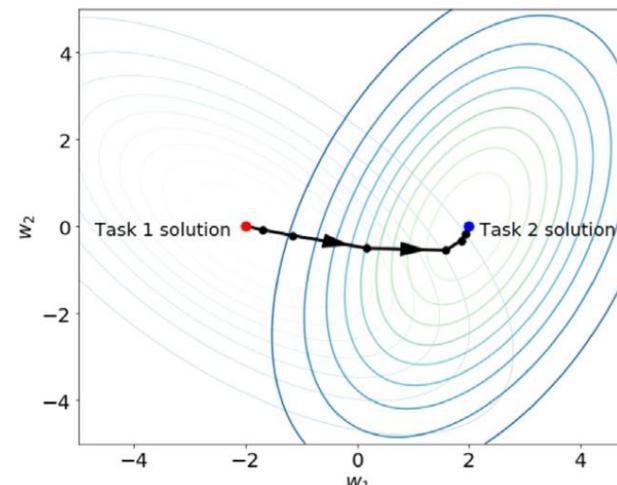
*Key assumption: no access to/revisiting of prior “task” data!*

# Key Challenge: Catastrophic Forgetting

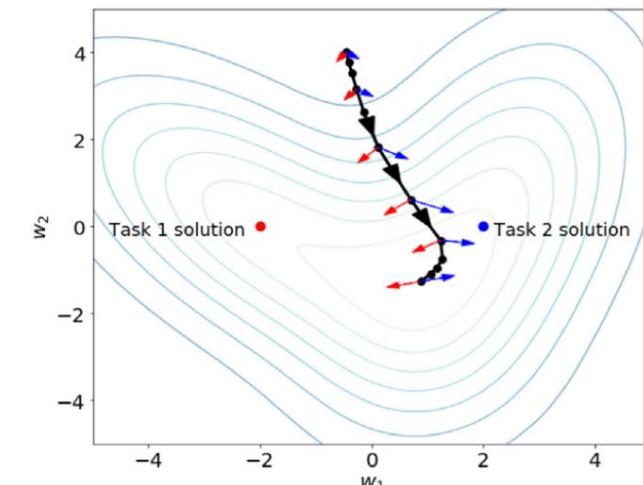
- Forget previously learned information upon learning new information
- **Mostly due to Gradient Descent.** Assume the knowledge stored in NN's parameters



(A)



(B)



(C)

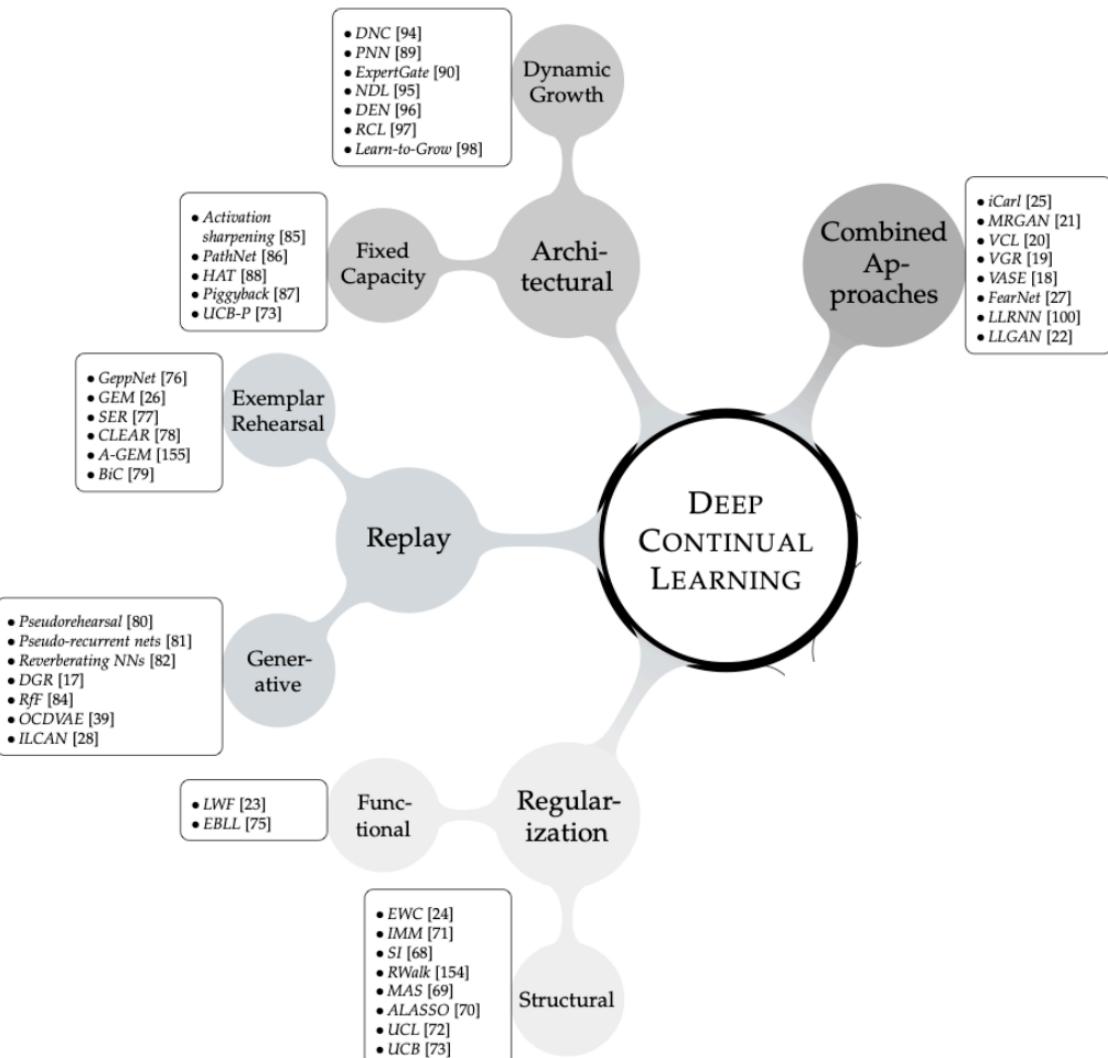
**Trends in Cognitive Sciences**

**Figure 3. Illustrations of Gradient Descent Optimization for Different Tasks.** (A) The trajectory taken by gradient descent optimization when minimizing a loss corresponding to a single task. (B) The optimization trajectory when subsequently training the same model on a second task. (C) The trajectory taken when using the total loss from both tasks (black) and the gradients from each individual task at multiple points during optimization (red and blue). See Box 2 for more detailed discussion.

How can we alleviate Catastrophic Forgetting ?

# Common strategies on Lifelong Learning

1. Regularize important parameters
2. Rehearsal (Reply Buffer)
3. Modular architecture (Dynamic Architecture)



# How to address Catastrophic Forgetting

Regularize important parameters

## Assumption

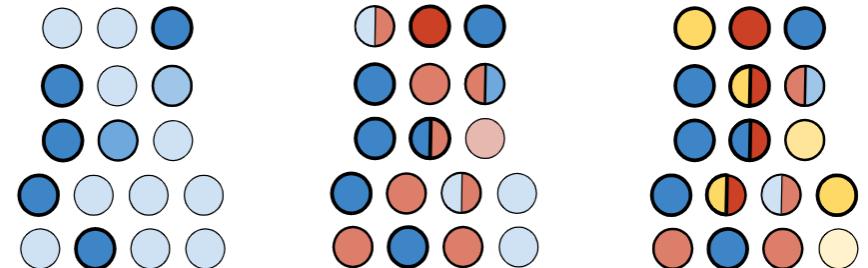
- Task-related knowledge stored in NN's parameter
- Less change on parameters, less forgetting issues

## Solution

- Explicitly identify relevant parameters for old tasks and restrict its changes on new task

(B)

○ = importance



Time

Task 1

Task 2

Task 3

# How to address Catastrophic Forgetting

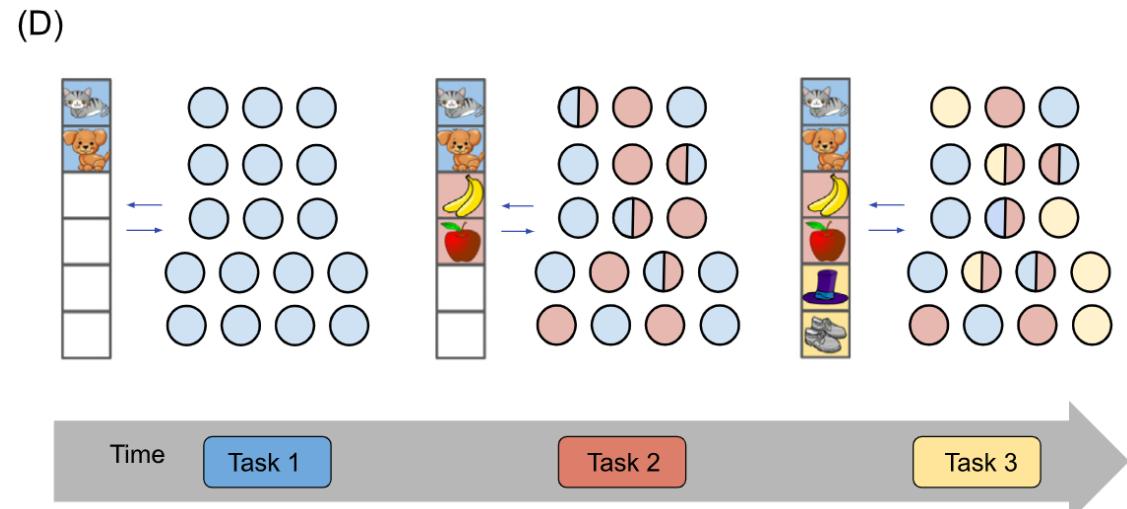
## Rehearsal (Replay buffer)

### Assumption

- Task-related knowledge stored in a subset of informative data examples

### Solution

- Identify informative old data and store them in a replay buffer
- Train a generative model on old task and then generate old task data in future tasks



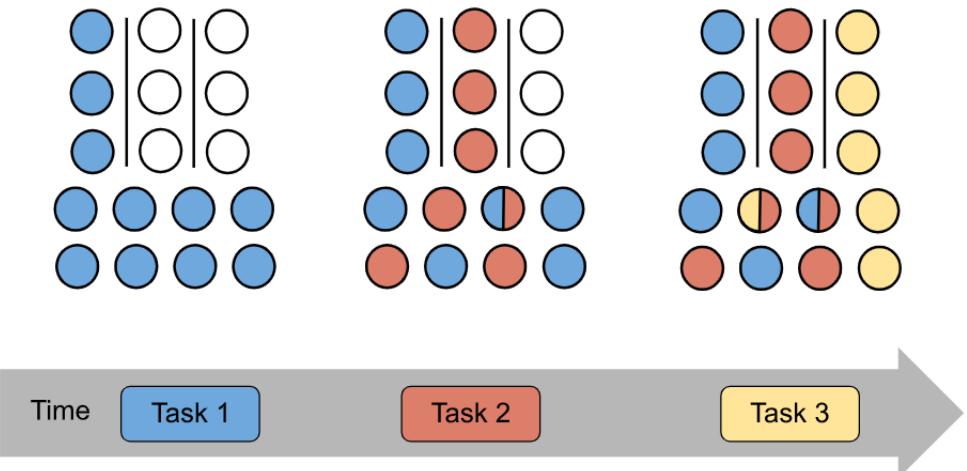
# How to address Catastrophic Forgetting

## Modular architecture (Dynamic Architecture)

### Assumption

- The overlap of distributed representations leads to forgetting issue[1].
- Different tasks should have their own set of isolated parameters

(C)



[1] Using Semi-Distributed Representations to Overcome Catastrophic Forgetting in Connectionist Networks [French, R. M. AAAI 1993]

Embracing Change: Continual Learning in Deep Neural Networks [Hadsell et al, Trends in Cognitive Sciences 2020]

# How to address Catastrophic Forgetting

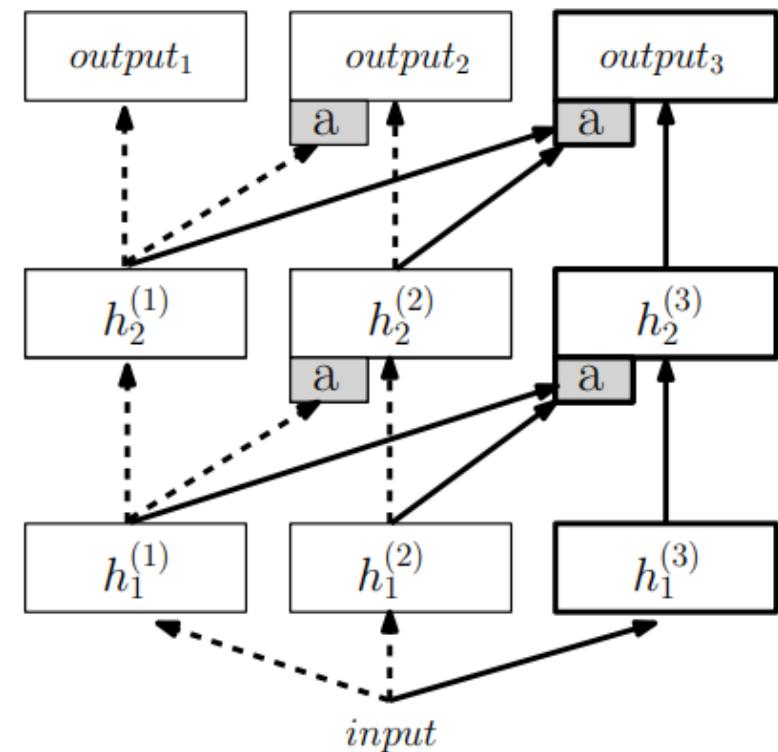
## Modular architecture (Dynamic Architecture)

### Assumption

- The overlap of distributed representations leads to forgetting issue.
- Different tasks should have their own set of isolated parameters

### Solution 1

- Grow or expand the architecture

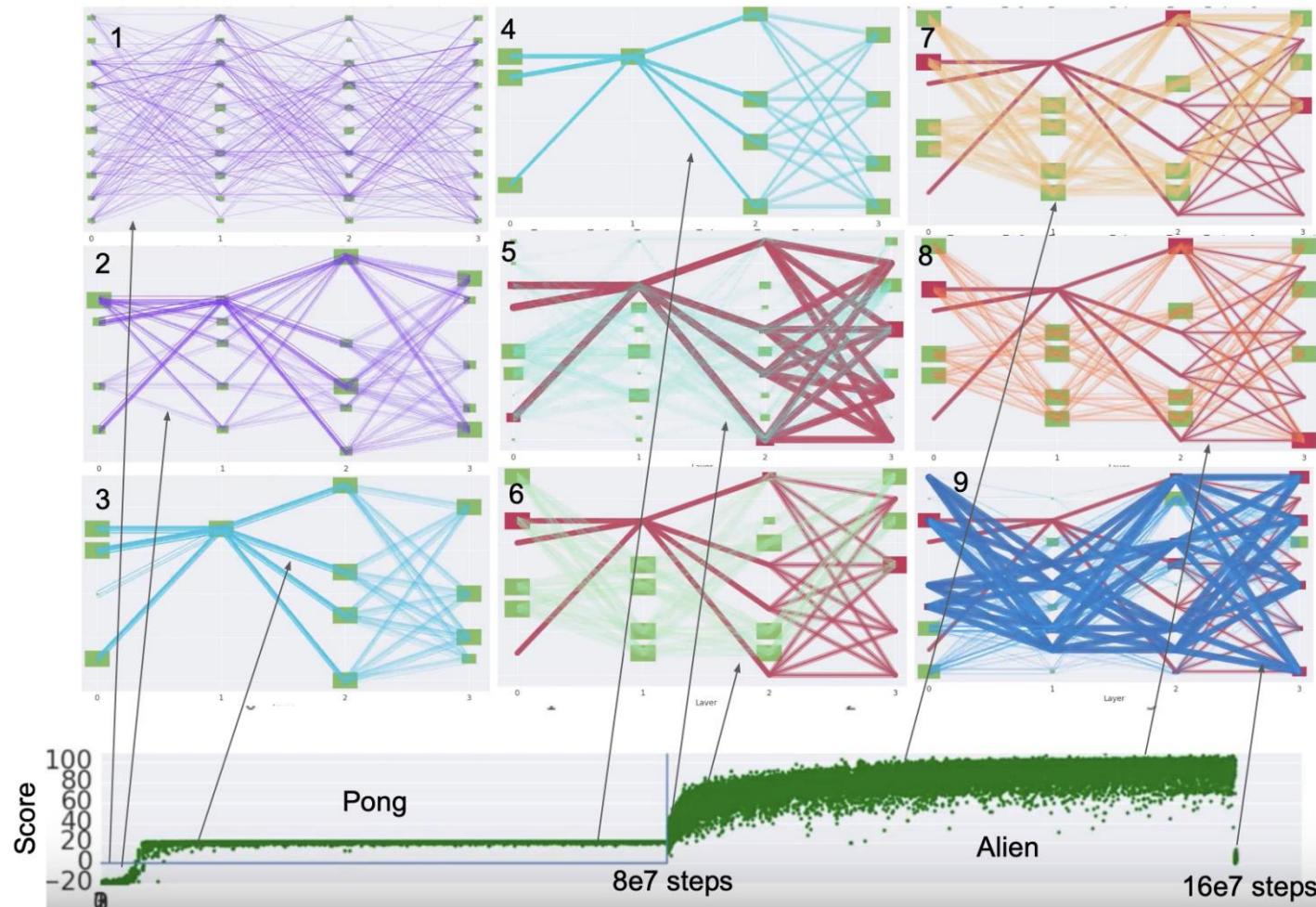


# How to address Catastrophic Forgetting

Modular architecture (Dynamic Architecture)

## Solution 2

- The NN is over-parameterized
- Each task activates a small non-overlapped subset of parameters sequentially



What is Few Shot Class Incremental Learning?

# Few shot class incremental learning (FSCIL)



# Few shot class incremental learning (FSCIL)

## A more realistic scenario

- Imbalanced datasets across a sequence of tasks
- Few annotated data in each incremental session

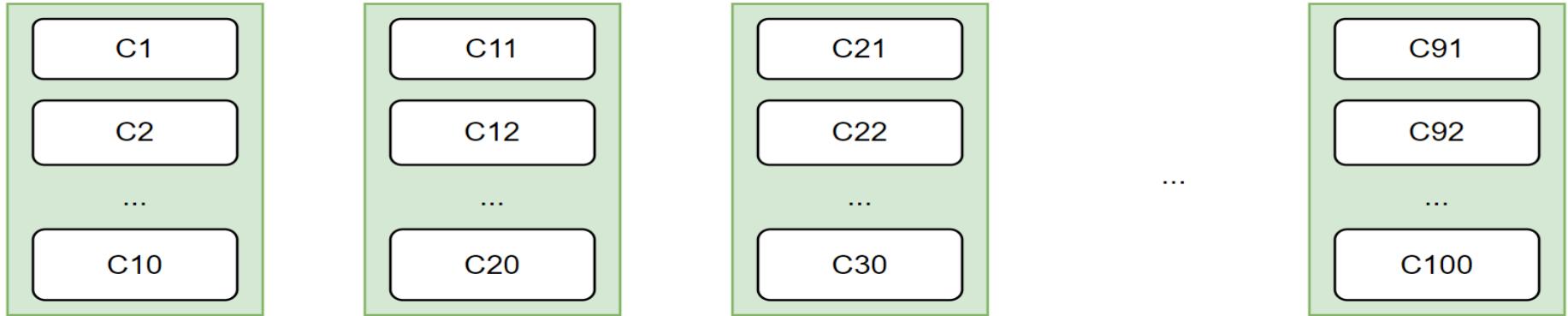


Birdie is an AI agent that can classify 100 birds

101th bird ??

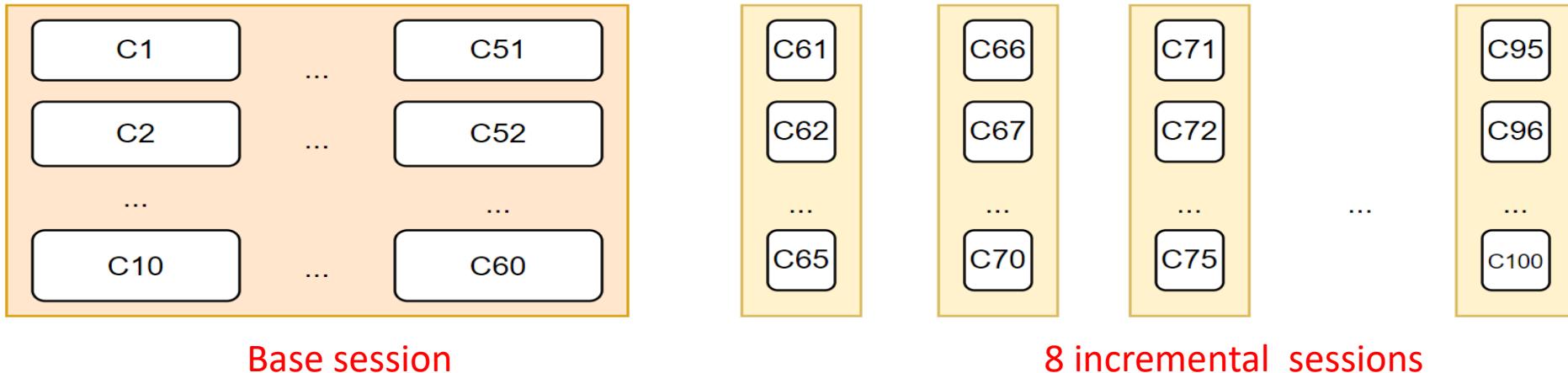


# Few shot class incremental learning (FSCIL)

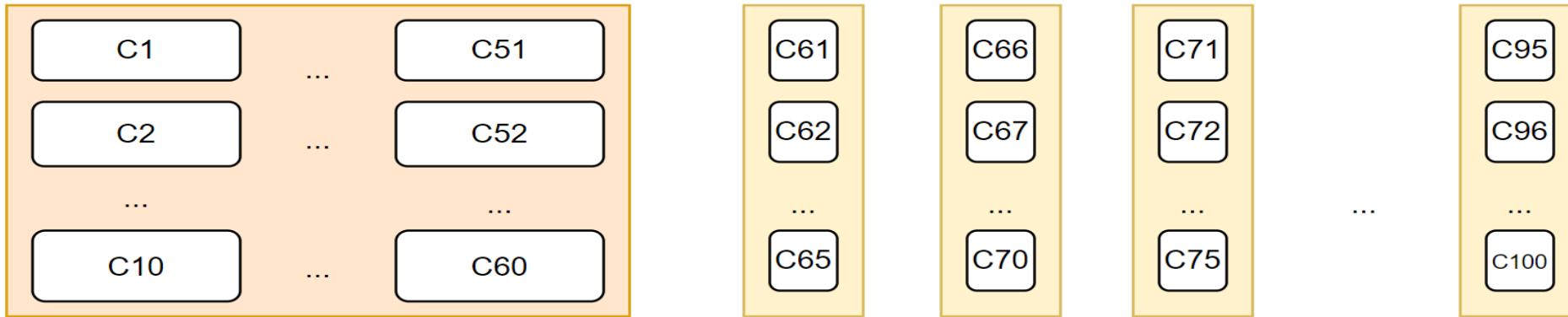


## Problem

- Different number of classes between the base and incremental sessions
- Few-shot data in incremental sessions (N-way-K-shot)



# Few shot class incremental learning (FSCIL)



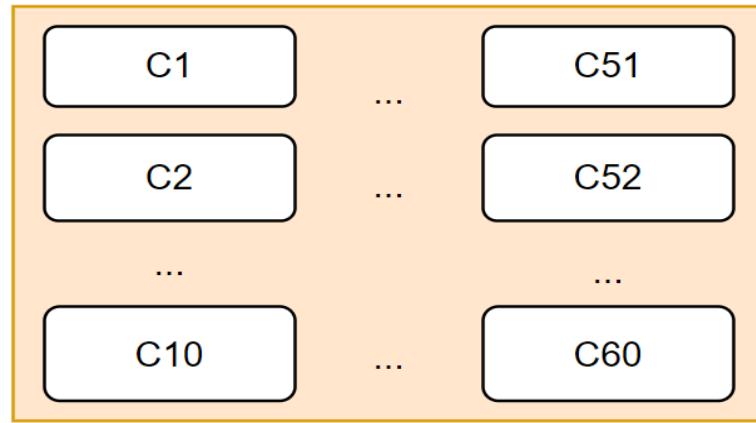
## Challenges

- imbalanced datasets → Difficult to make a balance between **plasticity & stability**
- Few shot data → **Overfitting** in incremental sessions

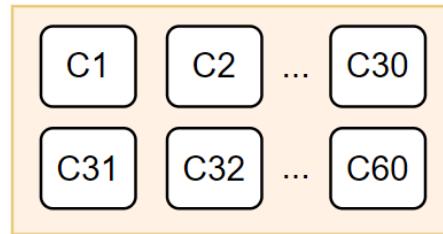
## Three stages in FSCIL

- Base session training
- Incremental session learning
- Evaluation after each session

# An example of FSCIL

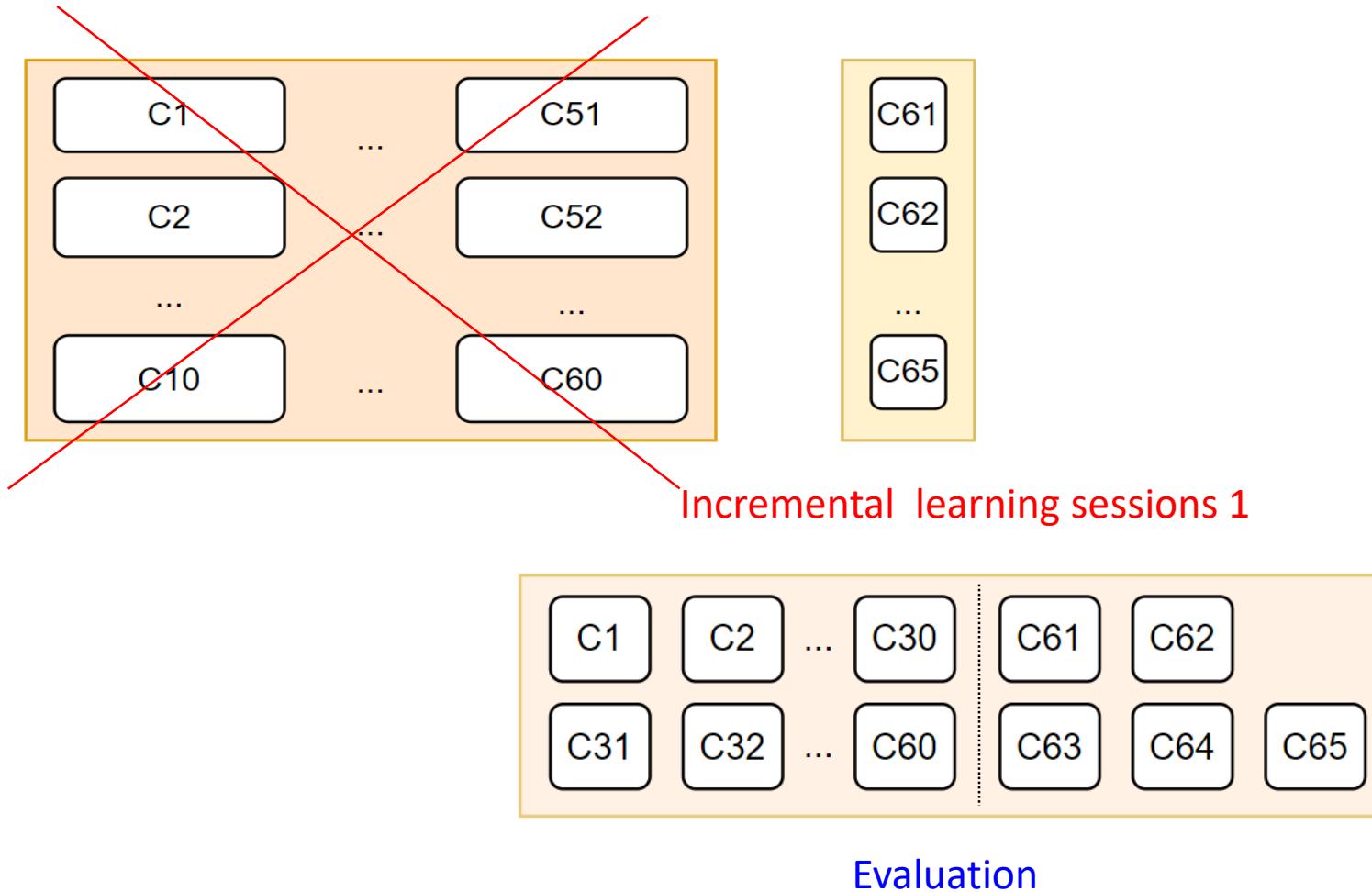


Base session training

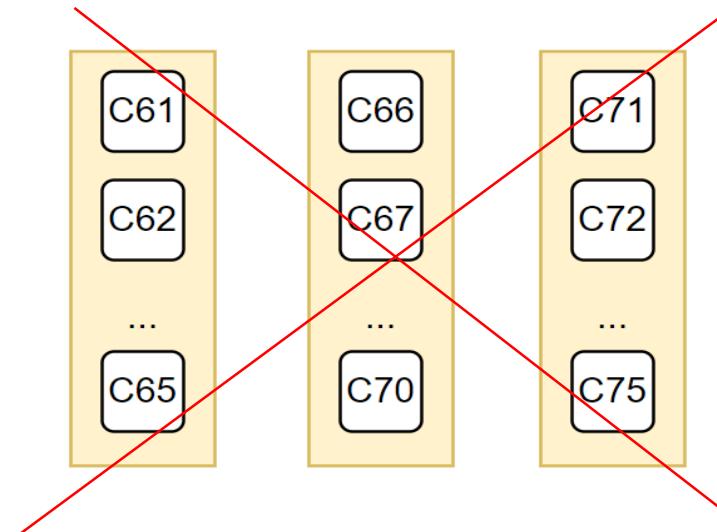
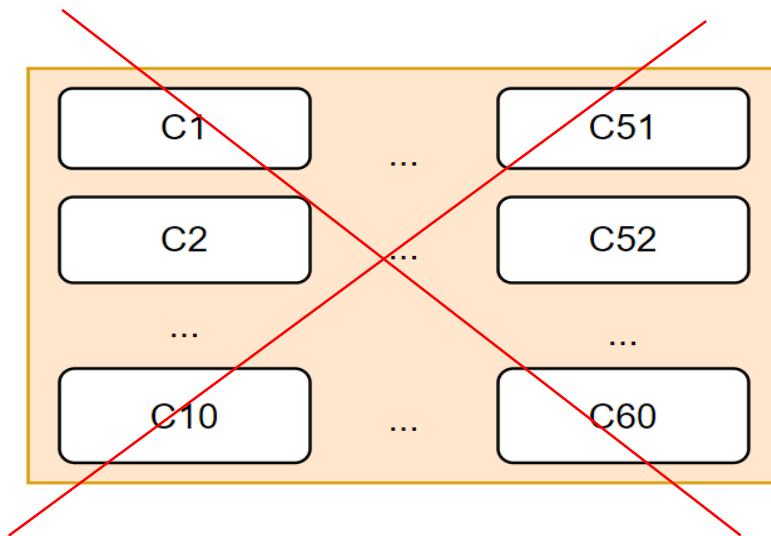


Evaluation

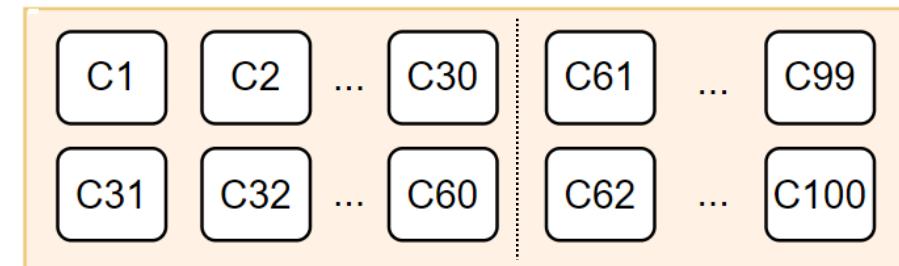
# Few shot class incremental learning (FSCIL)



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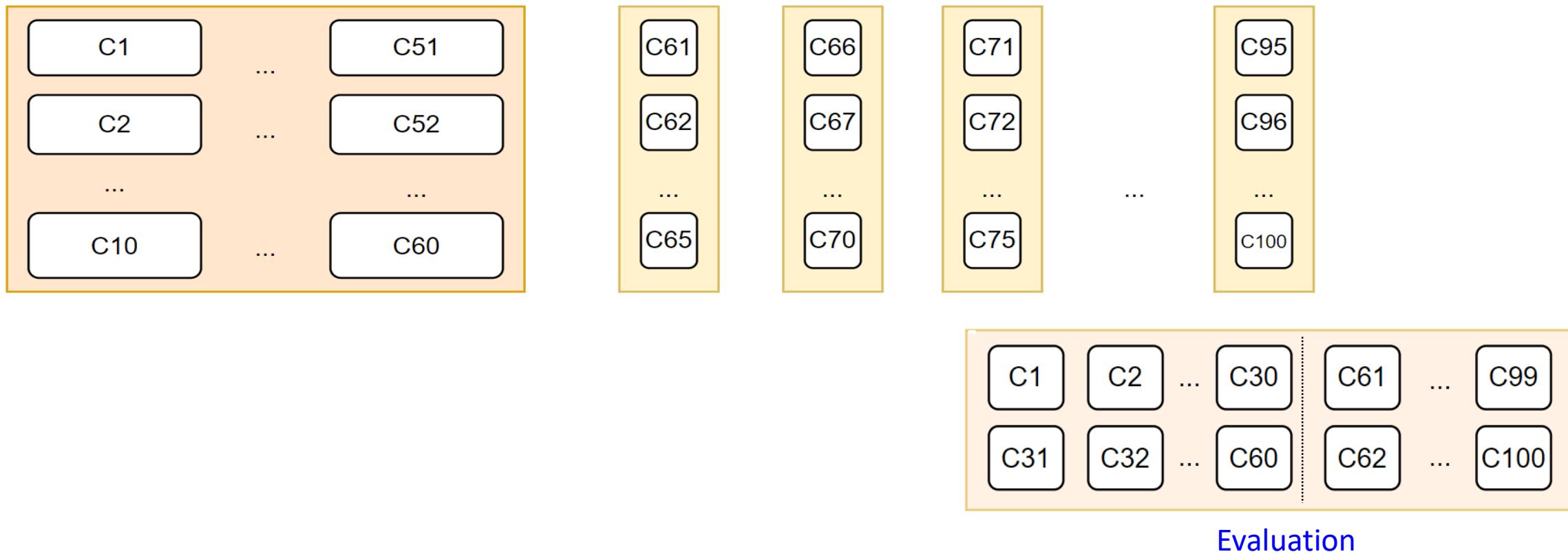


Incremental learning  
sessions 8

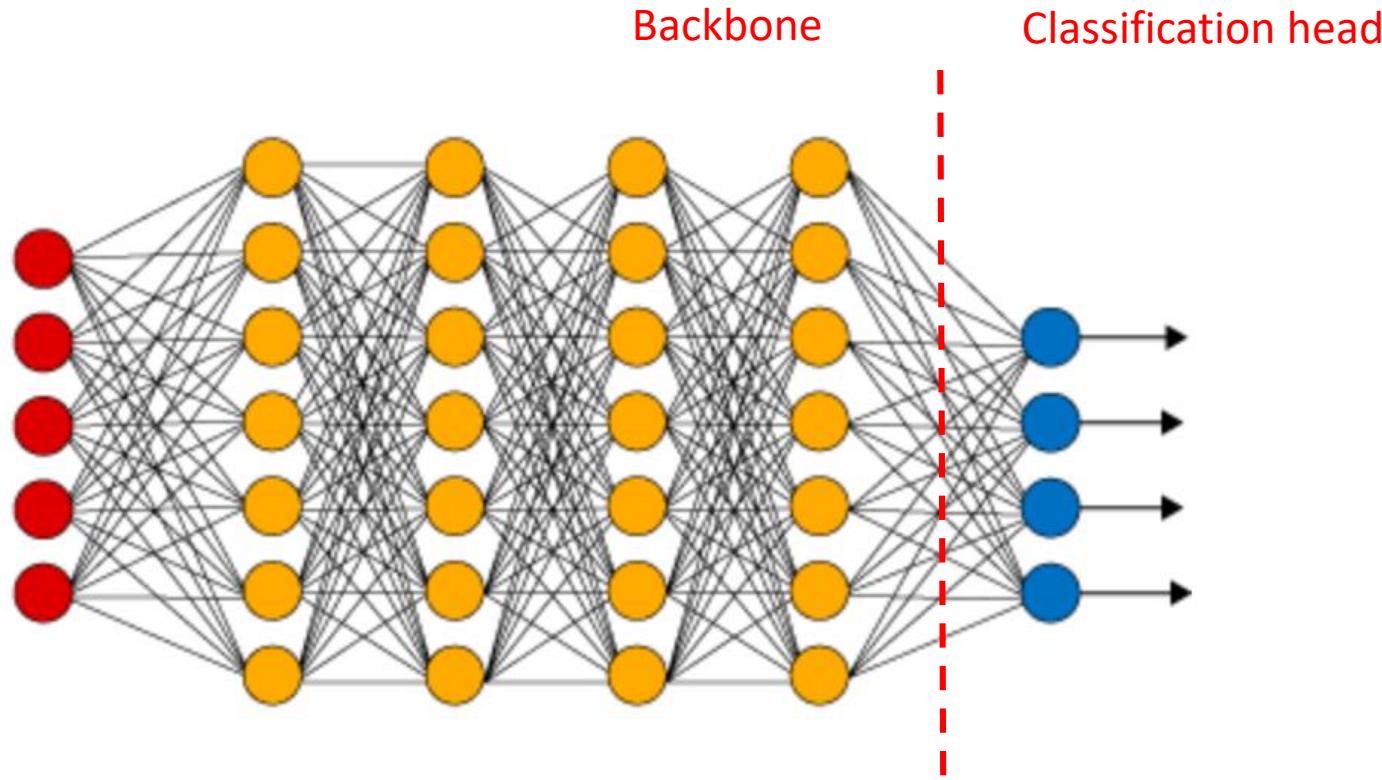


Evaluation

# Few shot class incremental learning (FSCIL)



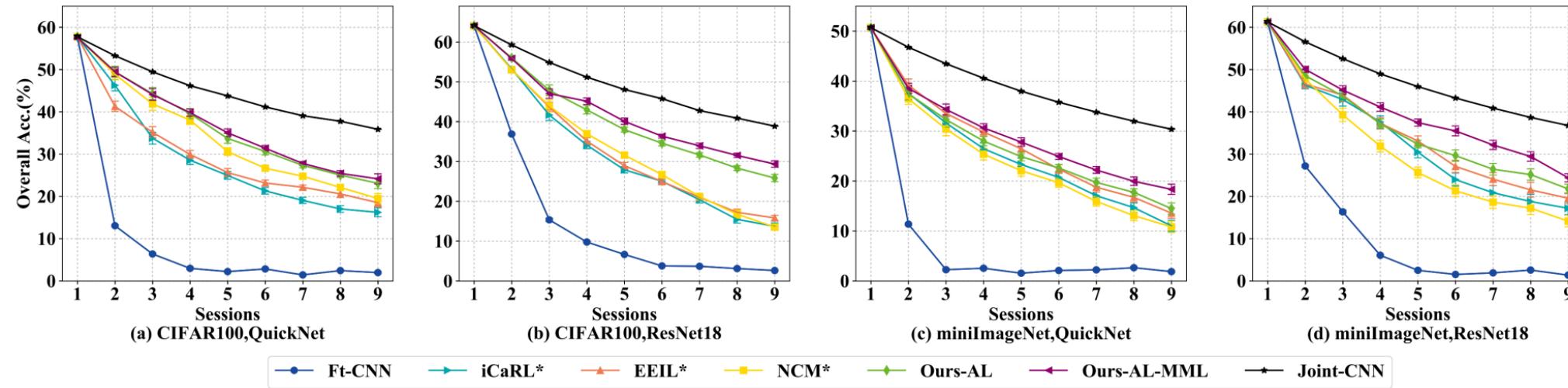
# Methods on Few Shot Class Incremental Learning



### Baseline (Fine-tune)

- Pre-trained backbone and classification head on the base session
- Update backbone on new data
- Train a classification head on new data, and concatenate with the old head

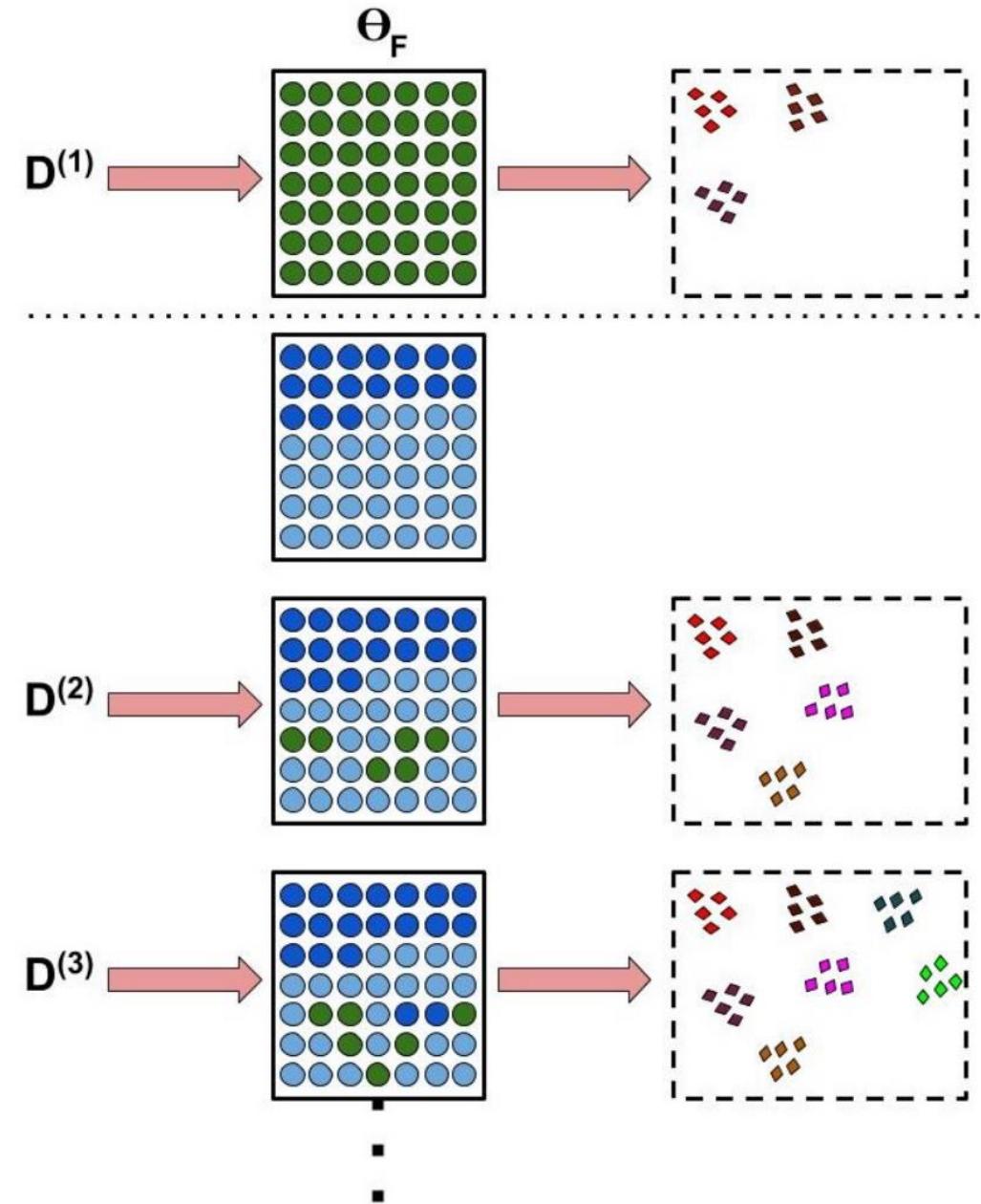
# Few shot class incremental learning (FSCIL)



Method	sessions											our relative improvements
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	
Ft-CNN	68.68	44.81	32.26	25.83	25.62	25.22	20.84	16.77	18.82	18.25	17.18	+9.10
Joint-CNN	68.68	62.43	57.23	52.80	49.50	46.10	42.80	40.10	38.70	37.10	35.60	upper bound
iCaRL* [32]	68.68	52.65	48.61	44.16	36.62	29.52	27.83	26.26	24.01	23.89	21.16	+5.12
EEIL* [2]	68.68	53.63	47.91	44.20	36.30	27.46	25.93	24.70	23.95	24.13	22.11	+4.17
NCM* [13]	68.68	57.12	44.21	28.78	26.71	25.66	24.62	21.52	20.12	20.06	19.87	+6.41
<b>Ours-AL</b>	<b>68.68</b>	<b>61.01</b>	<b>55.35</b>	<b>50.01</b>	<b>42.42</b>	<b>39.07</b>	<b>35.47</b>	<b>32.87</b>	<b>30.04</b>	<b>25.91</b>	<b>24.85</b>	+1.43
<b>Ours-AL-MML</b>	<b>68.68</b>	<b>62.49</b>	<b>54.81</b>	<b>49.99</b>	<b>45.25</b>	<b>41.40</b>	<b>38.35</b>	<b>35.36</b>	<b>32.22</b>	<b>28.31</b>	<b>26.28</b>	

## Idea

- Pretrain NN on base session
- Identify and freeze “important” backbone parameters to minimize catastrophic forgetting

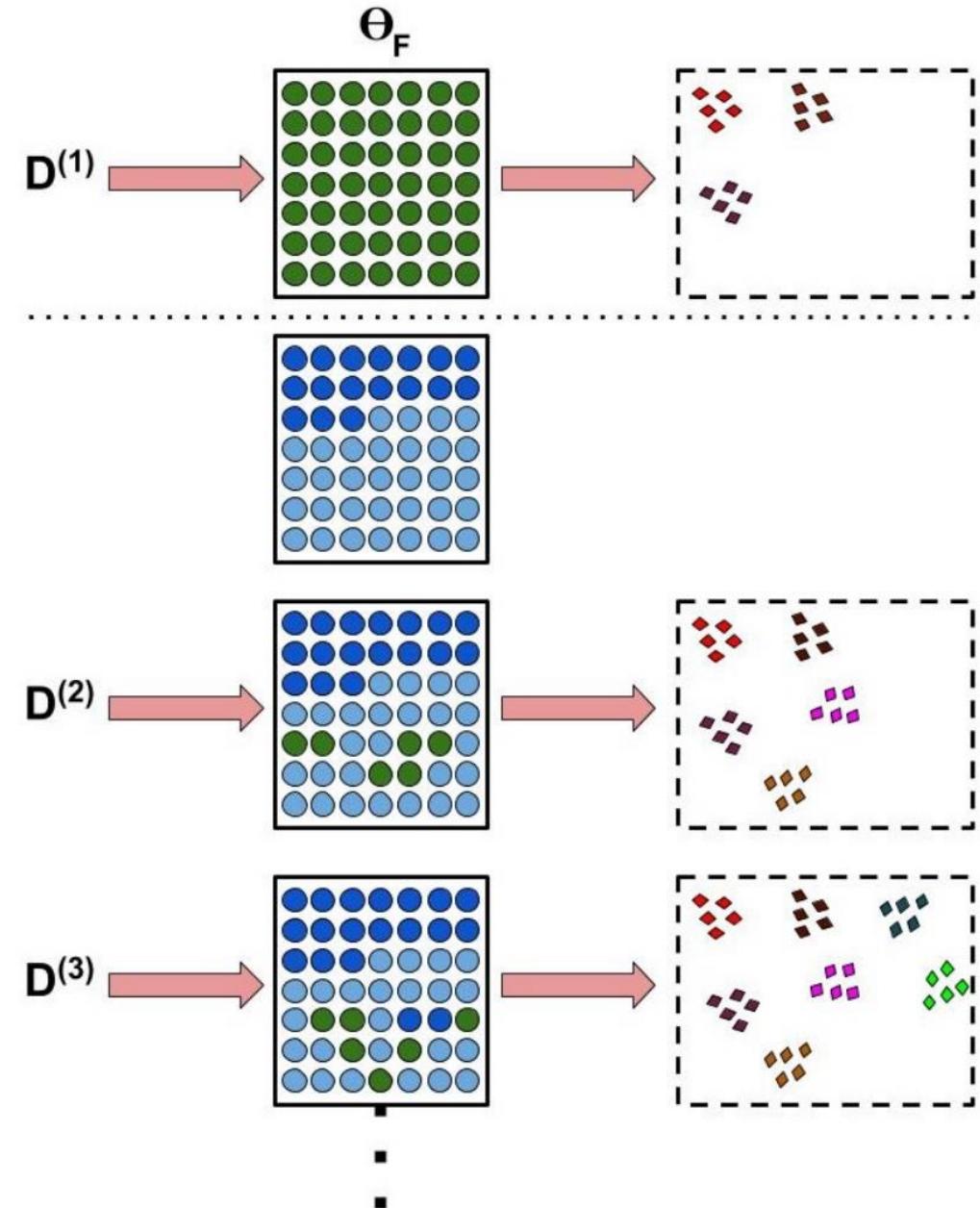


## Idea

- Pretrain NN on base session
- Identify and freeze “important” backbone parameters to minimize catastrophic forgetting

## How

- Heuristically identify “unimportant” parameters
- Criteria: 10% parameters with lowest magnitude in each layer



## Idea

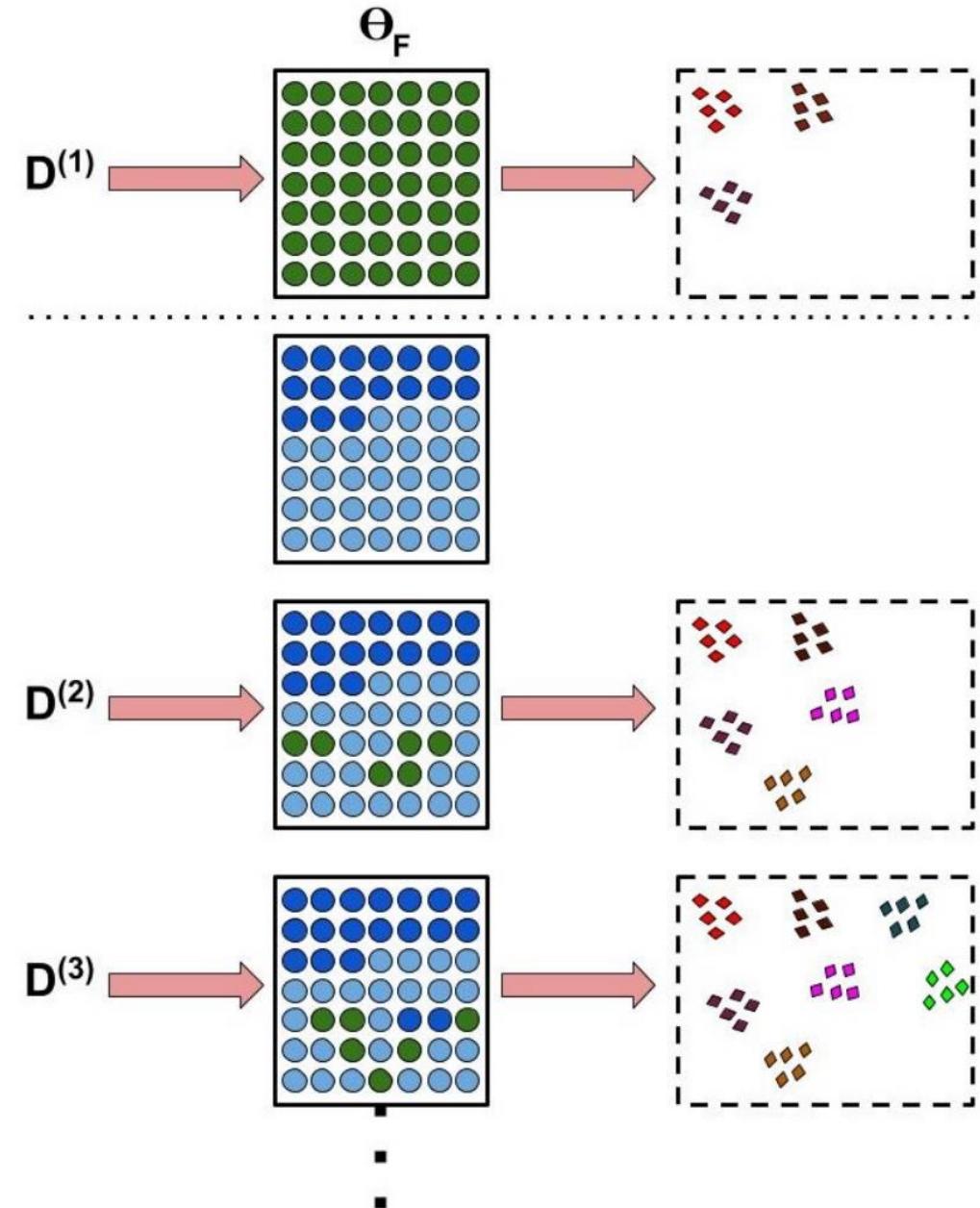
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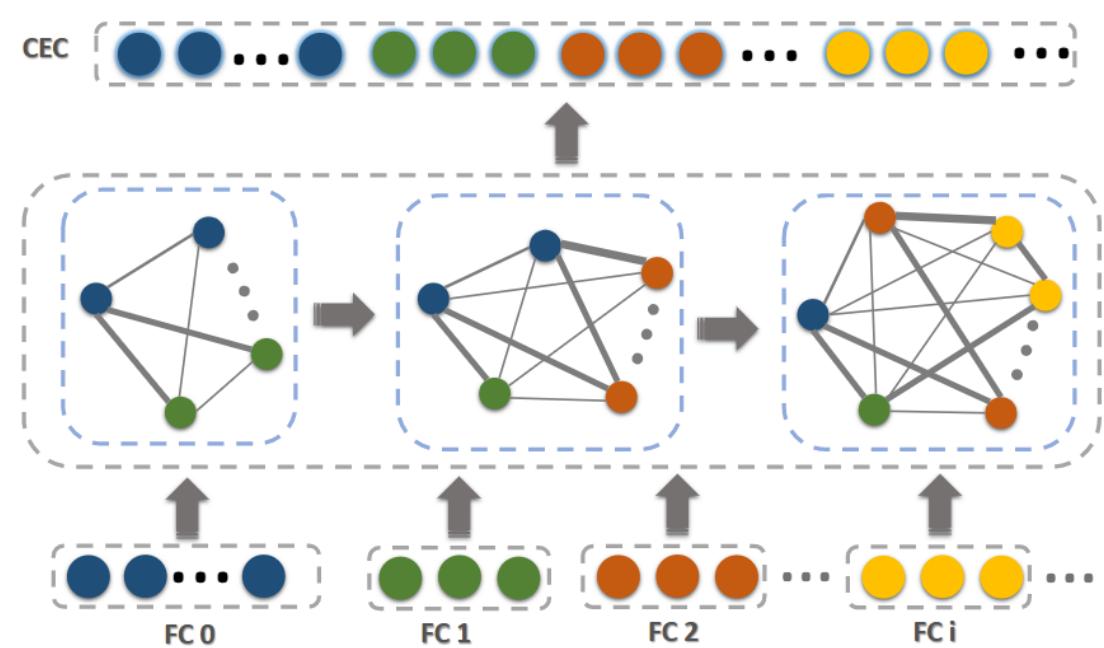
## Weakness

- **Hand-engineered** method requires extra hyper-parameters tuning
- Not consider any **incremental scenarios** during training



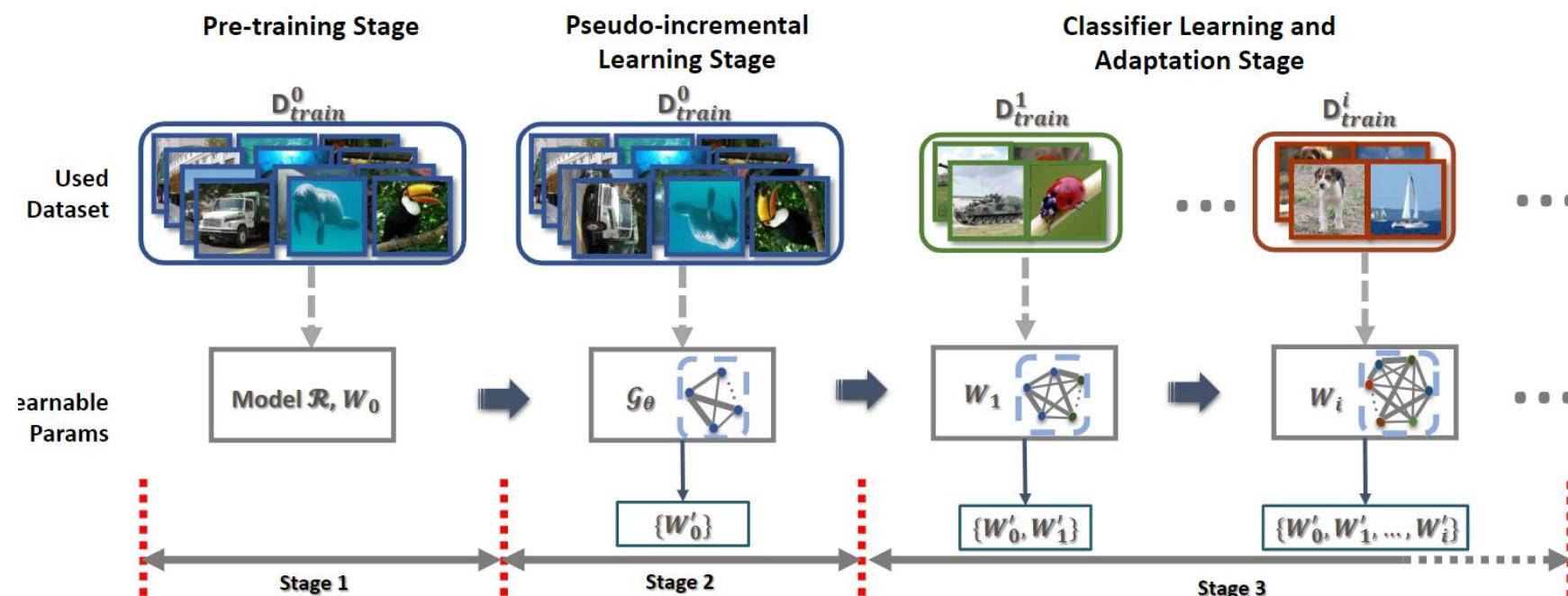
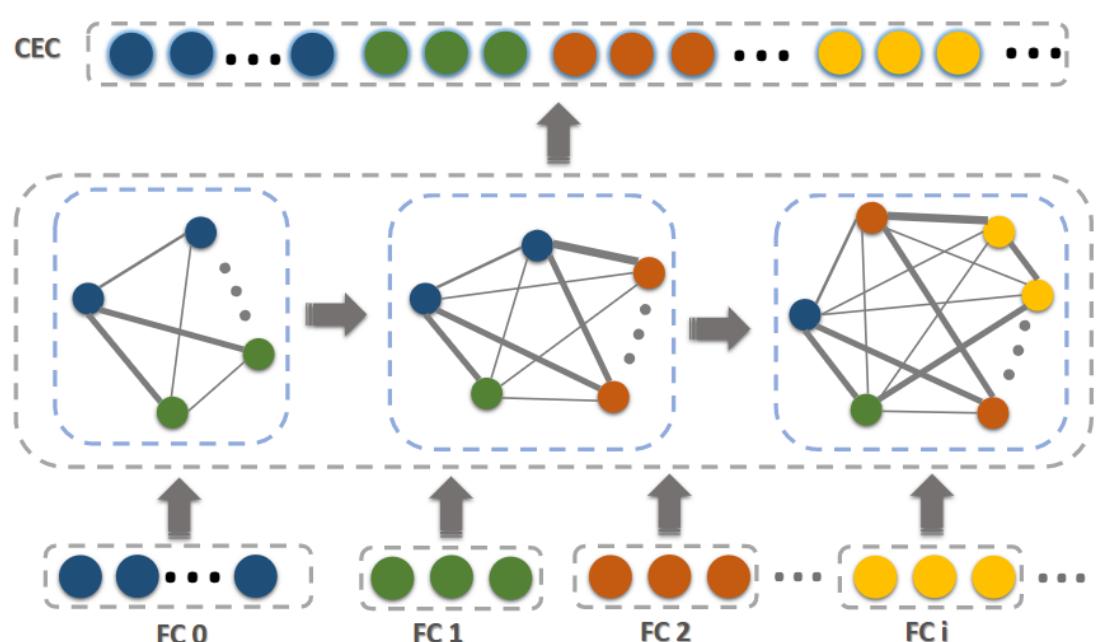
## Idea

- **Freeze backbone** to avoid catastrophic forgetting
- **Combine old and current classifier heads via GNN** to encourage knowledge transfer



## Idea

- Freeze backbone to avoid catastrophic forgetting
- Combine old and current classifier heads via GNN to encourage knowledge transfer
- Simulate incremental scenarios in base session training to meta learn GNN via episodic learning



# Meta learning: Learn to Learn

## What is Meta Learning?

- A novel machine learning paradigm: **learn the process of learning (learning algorithm)**
- Representation engineering → Representation learning (deep learning) → Algorithm or Meta-representation learning (meta learning)

# Meta learning: Learn to Learn

## What is Meta Learning?

- A novel machine learning paradigm: **learn the process of learning (learning algorithm)**
- Representation engineering → Representation learning (deep learning) → Algorithm or Meta-representation learning (meta learning)

## What is Meta Representation?

- Some aspects of learning algorithm
  - How to design network architecture
  - How to initialize network parameters
  - How to optimize the model (learning rate, regularization, optimizers, full/partial network)
- Meta Representation + A specific Task = Representation

# Meta learning: Learn to Learn

## What is Meta Learning?

- A novel machine learning paradigm: **learn the process of learning (learning algorithm)**
- Representation engineering → Representation learning (deep learning) → Algorithm or Meta-representation learning (meta learning)

## How to learn Meta representation?

- Key assumption
  - Tasks samples **from a task distribution**
  - They share same meta-representation (meta-knowledge)
- Two phases
  - **Meta-Training:** Learn meta-representation across a large-scale of tasks
  - **Meta-Testing:** Verify whether generalize to a unseen specific task

# How does meta-learning work? An example

## Few Shot Learning (FSL)

- How to learn new concepts with a few examples
- **N-way-K-shot data:** N classes, K samples per class

Given 1 example of 5 classes:



training data  $\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}$

Classify new examples



test set  $\mathbf{x}_{\text{test}}$

# How does meta-learning work? An example



## Under meta-learning framework

- Task = learn to generalize with a few examples
- Task distribution = Simulate a large sale of similar tasks

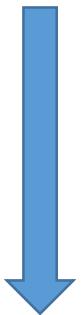
# How does meta-learning work? An example



## Under meta-learning framework

- Task = learn to generalize with a few examples
- Task distribution = Simulate a large sale of similar tasks
- **Goal** = How to adapt with support set and perform well on query set

**FSL**= Learn to generalize to unseen classes with a few examples

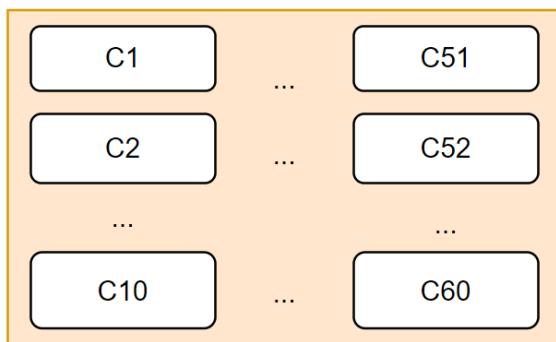
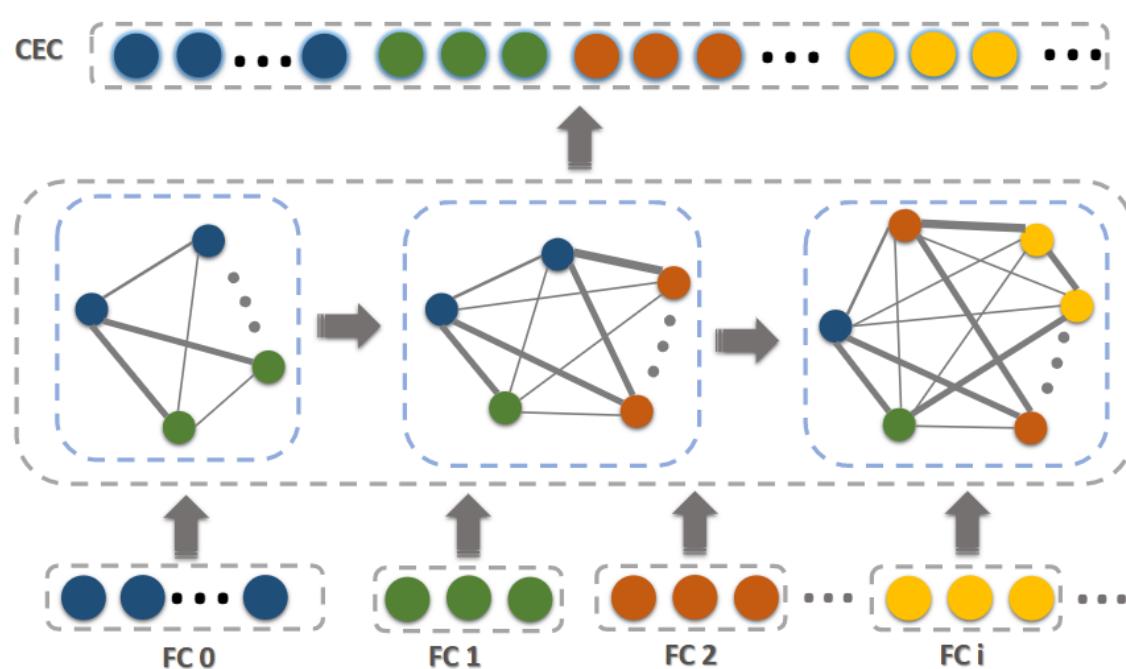


Also use meta learning

**FSCIL** = Learn to incrementally learn with a few examples

## Idea

- Freeze backbone to avoid catastrophic forgetting
- Combine old and current classifier heads via GNN to encourage knowledge transfer
- **Simulate incremental scenarios** in base session training to **meta learn GNN** via **episodic learning**



Base session

Sample episodes →

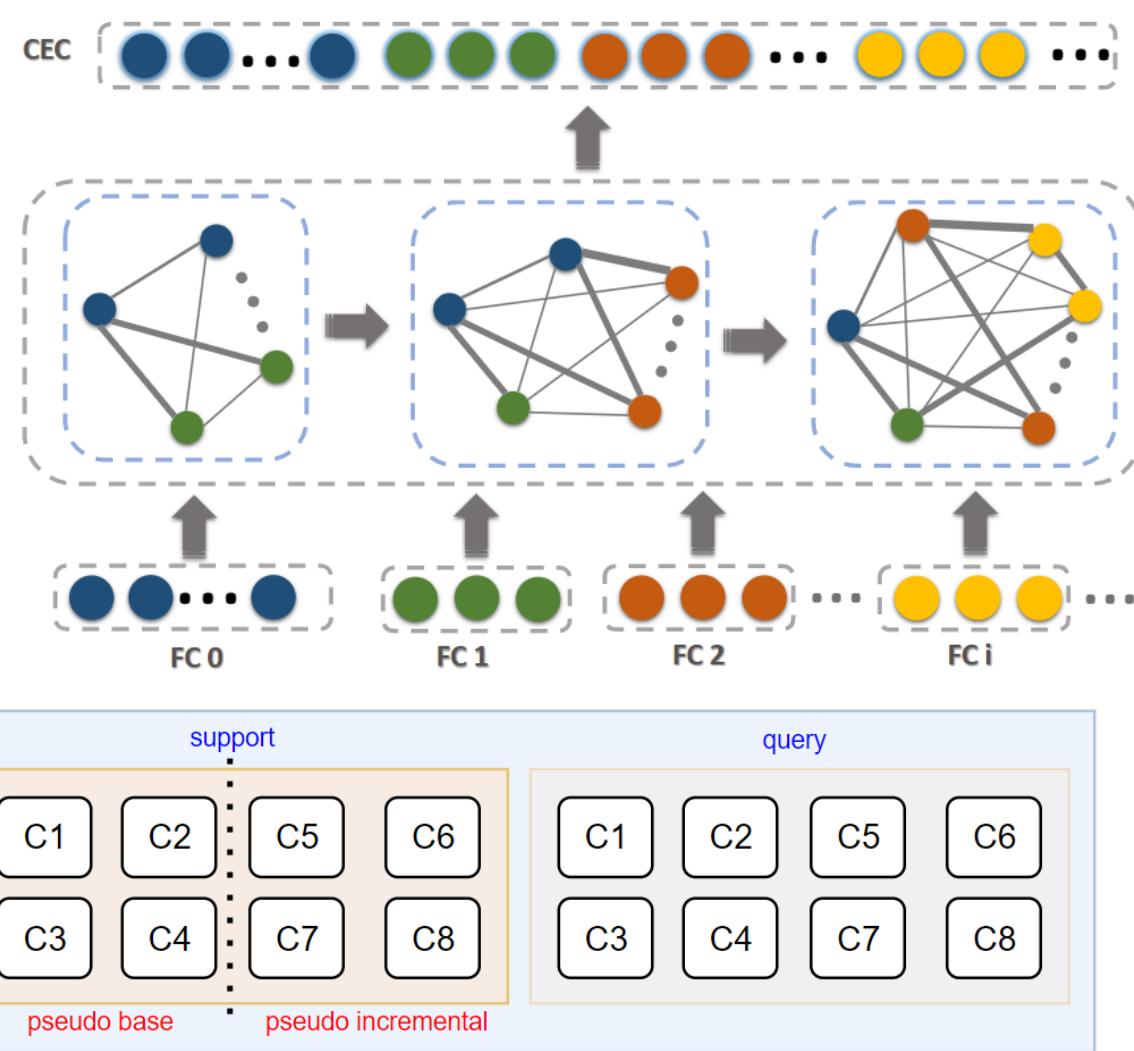


### Episode

- One pseudo base session + One pseudo incremental session
- The number of classes = 1: 1

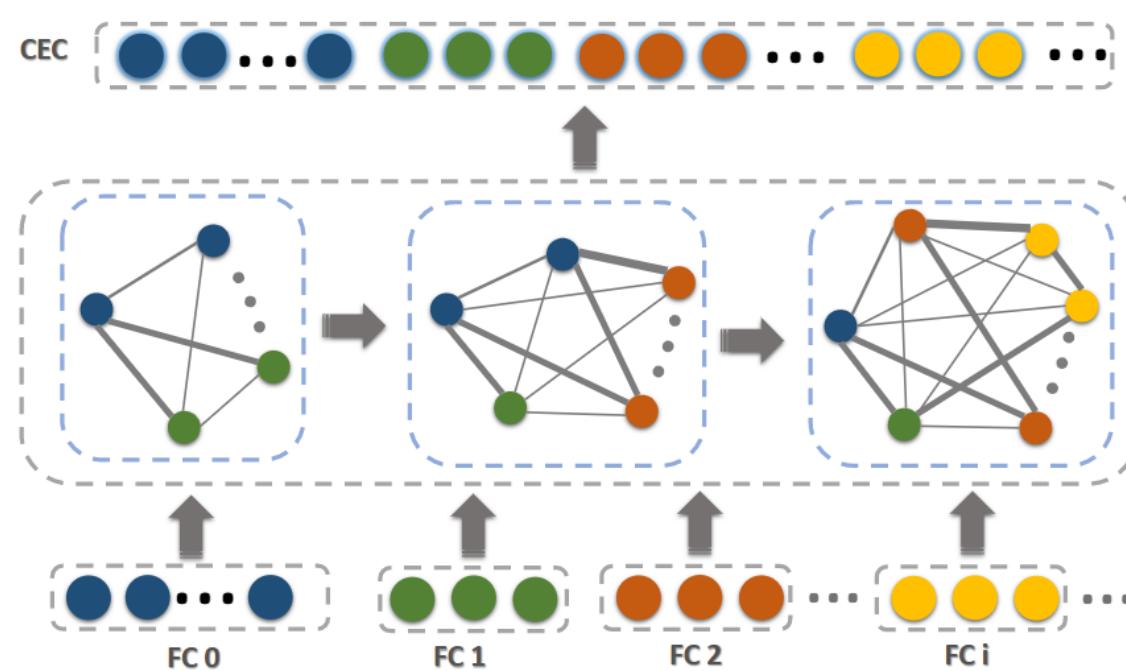
## Strengths

- End-to-End learning without hand-engineered modules
- Design a module to encourage knowledge transfer
- Consider incremental scenarios during training



## Strengths

- End-to-End learning without hand-engineered modules
- Design a module to encourage knowledge transfer
- Consider incremental scenarios during training



## Weakness

- Misalignment between training and evaluation phases due to the episode construction
- Not learn to incrementally learn in a longer horizon
- Fixed backbone limits generalization on new classes



**Meta-training:** two pseudo sessions

**Meta-testing (Test-time)**

- multiple incremental sessions
- Imbalance classes between base and incremental sessions

# **MetaFSCIL: A Meta-Learning Approach for Few-Shot Class Incremental Learning**

Zhixiang Chi<sup>1</sup>, Li Gu<sup>1</sup>, Huan Liu<sup>1,2</sup>, Yang Wang<sup>1,3</sup>, Yuanhao Yu<sup>1</sup>, Jin Tang<sup>1</sup>

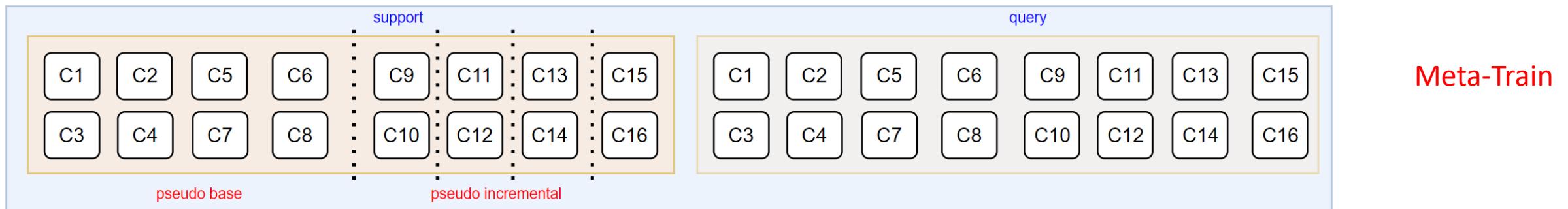
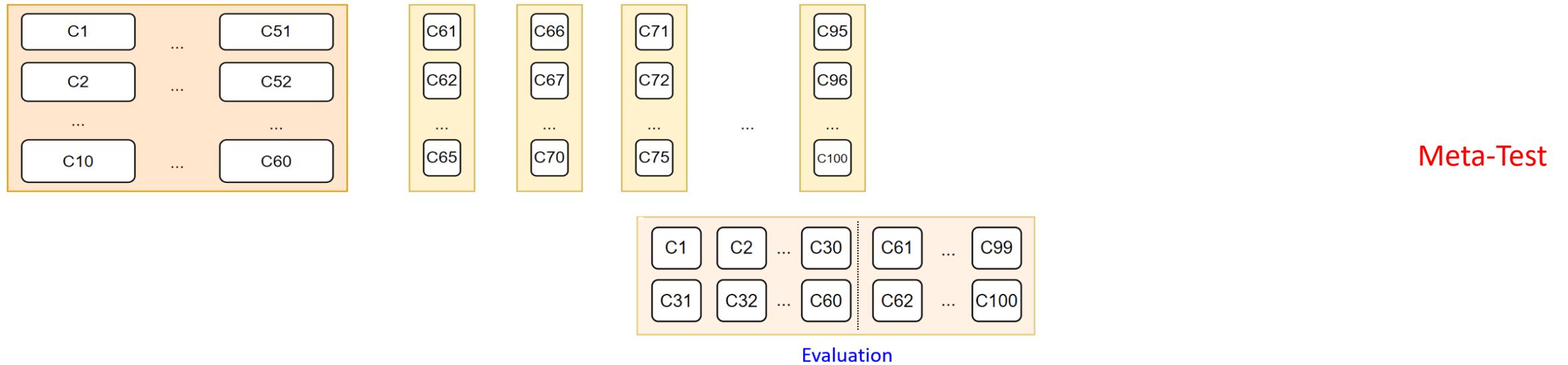
<sup>1</sup>Noah's Ark Lab, Huawei Technologies    <sup>2</sup>McMaster University, Canada

<sup>3</sup>University of Manitoba, Canada

# Idea 1: Aligned Episode construction

## Idea

- Align the scenario (incremental learning process) between meta-training and meta-testing



# Idea 1: Aligned Episode construction

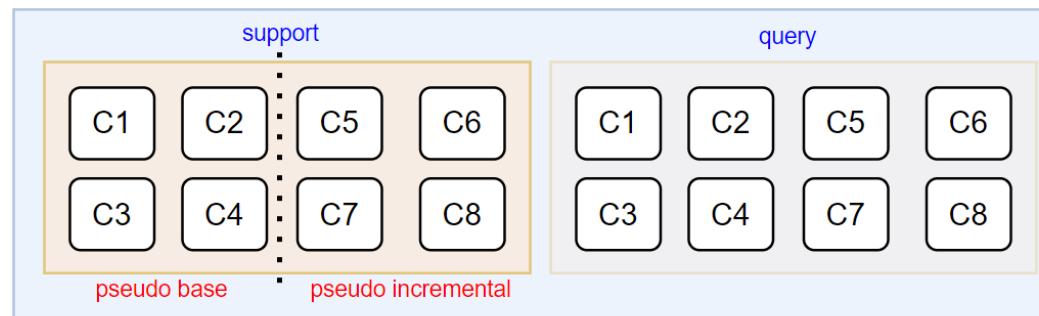
## Idea

- Align the scenario (incremental learning process) between meta-training and meta-testing

## How

- Sample multiple pseudo incremental sessions
- Introduce class imbalance to simulate combining base and incremental sessions

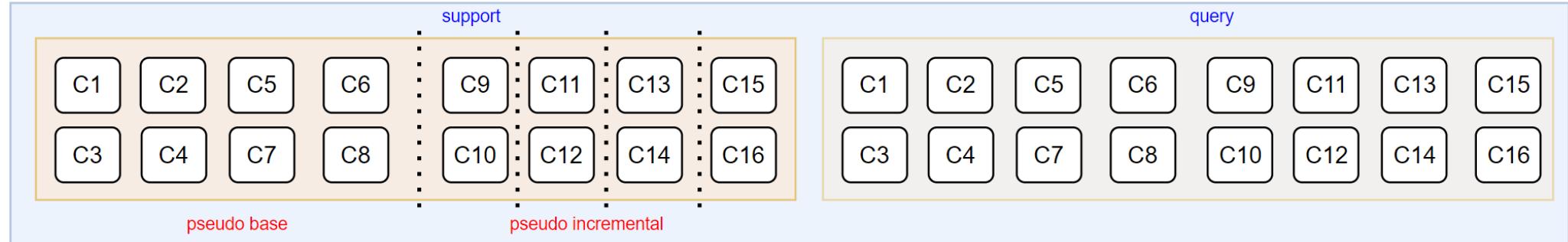
CEC



CEC: Learn with two sessions

Ours: Learn with a sequence of sessions

Ours



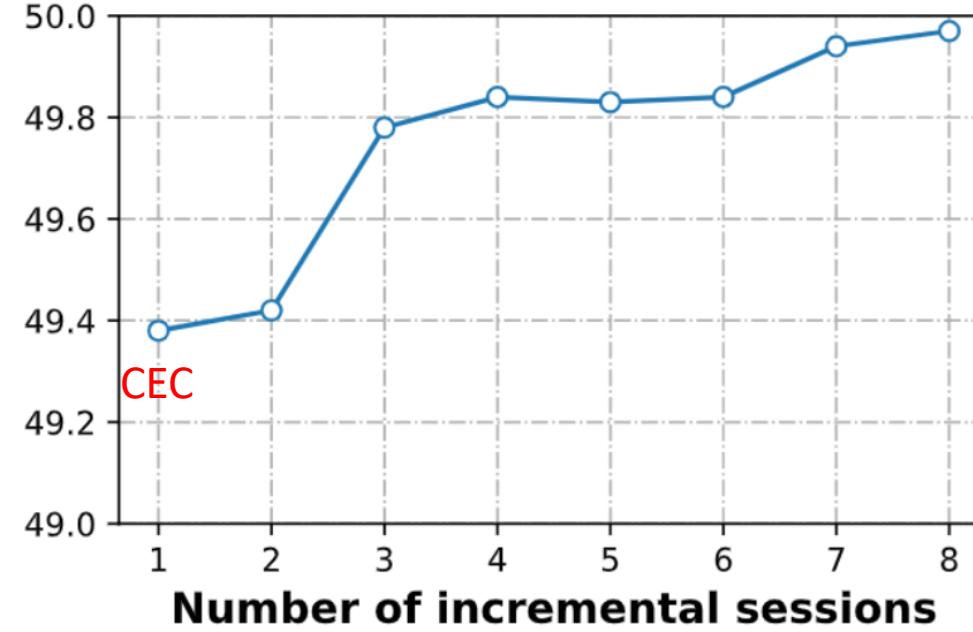
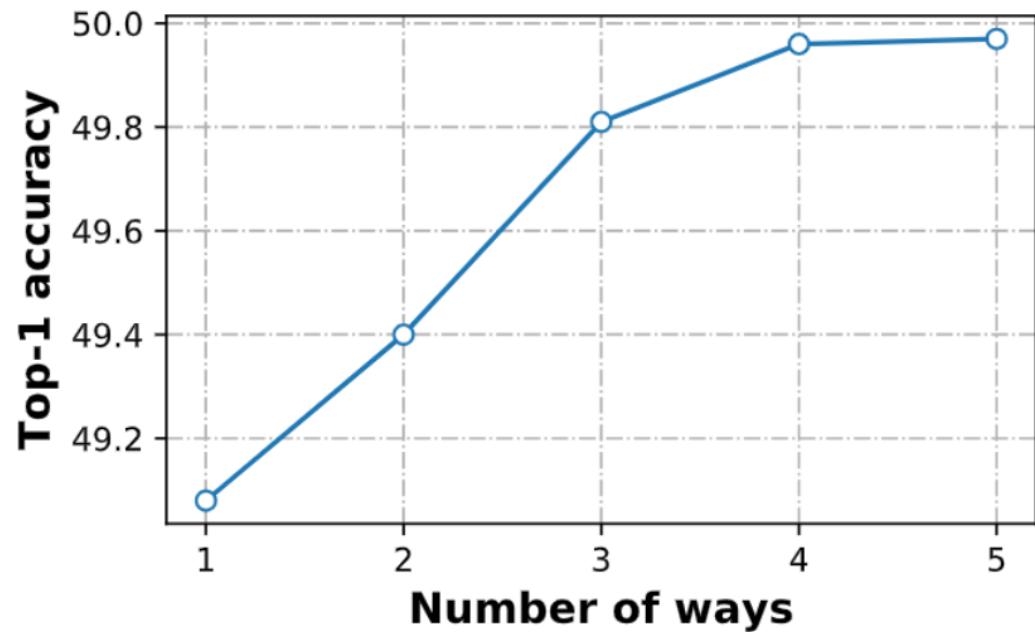
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# Idea 2: Meta learned backbone

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- Not handle domain distribution between base and incremental sessions via frozen pretrained backbone (**Rep.**) in CEC
- Update backbone parameter updates to encourage quick adaptation

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- Not handle domain distribution between base and incremental sessions via frozen pretrained backbone (**Rep.**) in CEC
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## How

- Meta train a backbone initialization[1] (**Init.**), and update its parameters during incremental sessions at meta-test time

Methods	Sessions (CIFAR100 w/ ResNet20)								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>Baseline (Rep.)</b>	74.33	67.23	63.18	59.24	56.03	53.05	50.66	48.69	<u>46.47</u>
<b>Baseline (Init.)</b>	74.33	66.78	62.30	57.18	54.33	51.68	48.73	46.67	<u>43.80</u>
<b>+Meta-learning (Rep.)</b>	74.45	70.03	65.75	61.69	58.68	55.81	53.68	51.68	<u>49.30</u>
<b>+Meta-learning (Init.)</b>	74.45	70.05	65.97	61.76	58.78	55.92	53.80	51.77	<u>49.41</u>

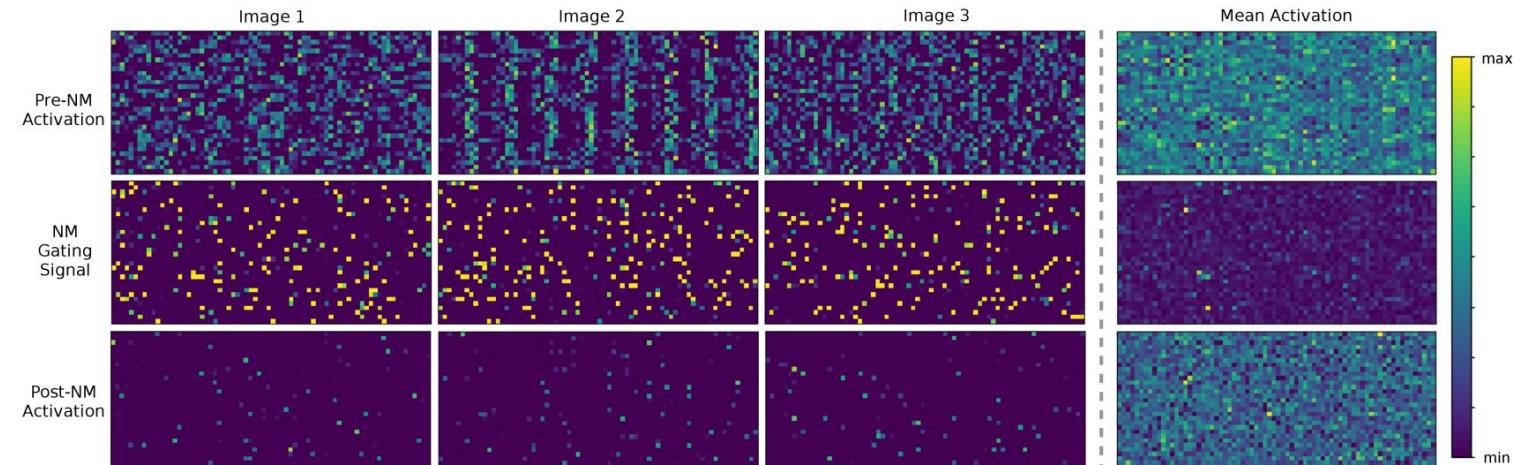
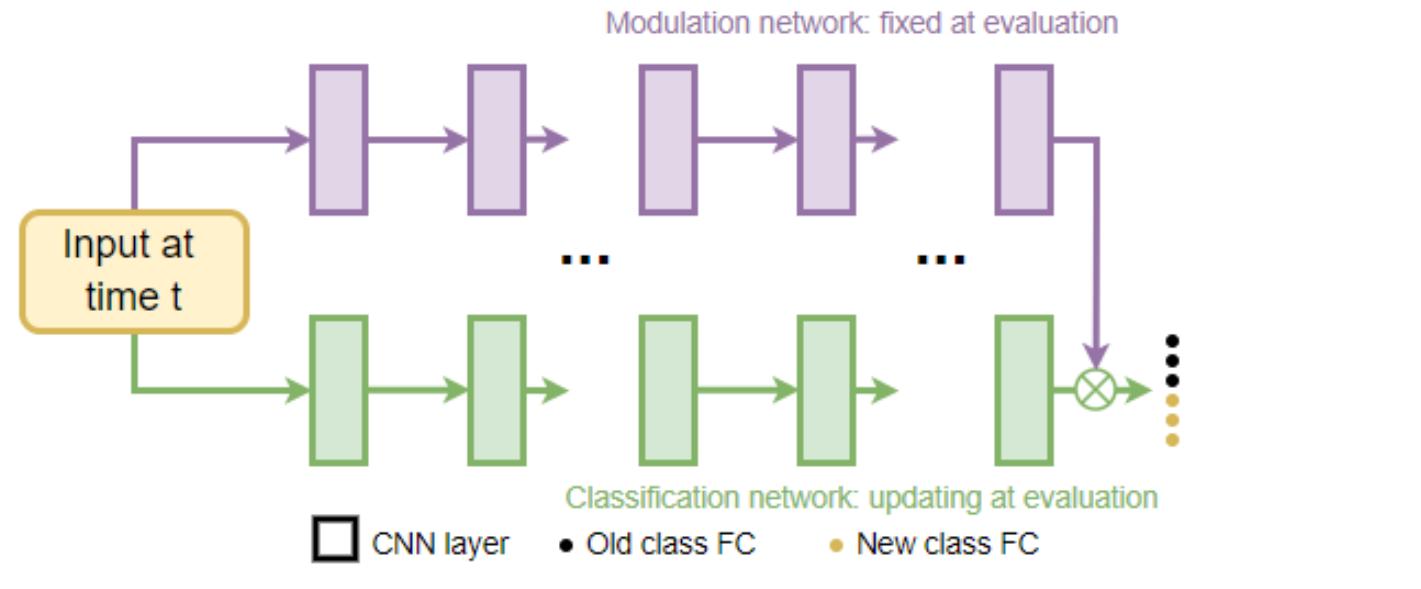
# Architecture Design: Modulation Network

## Idea

- Modular/Dynamic architecture
- Implicitly learn to sparsify non-overlapped activations for each task

## How

- Generate a mask on last layer's activation via Modulation Network



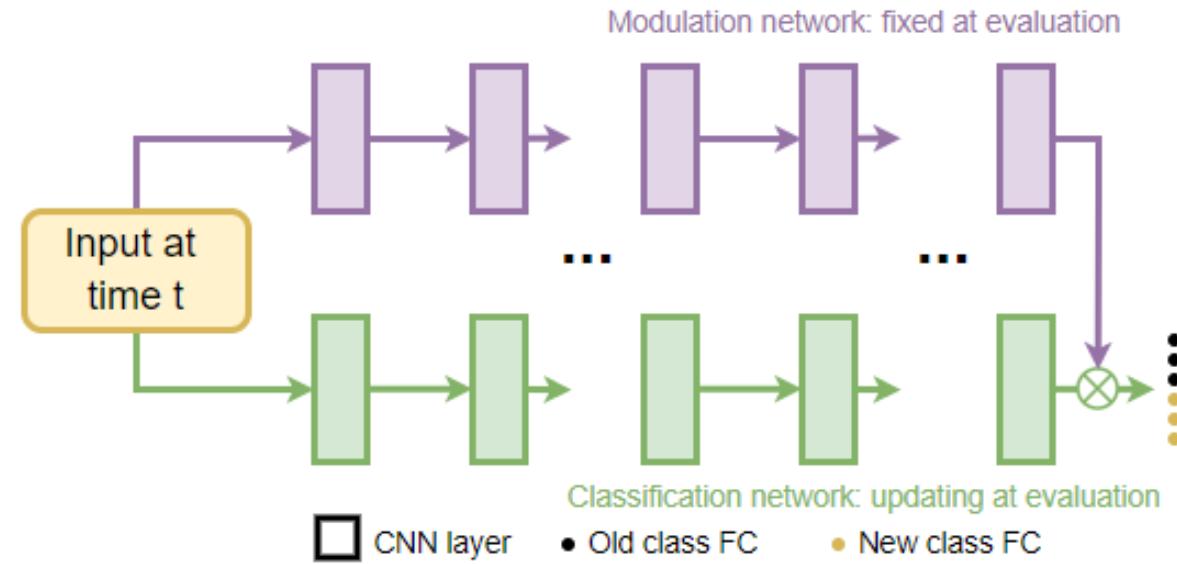
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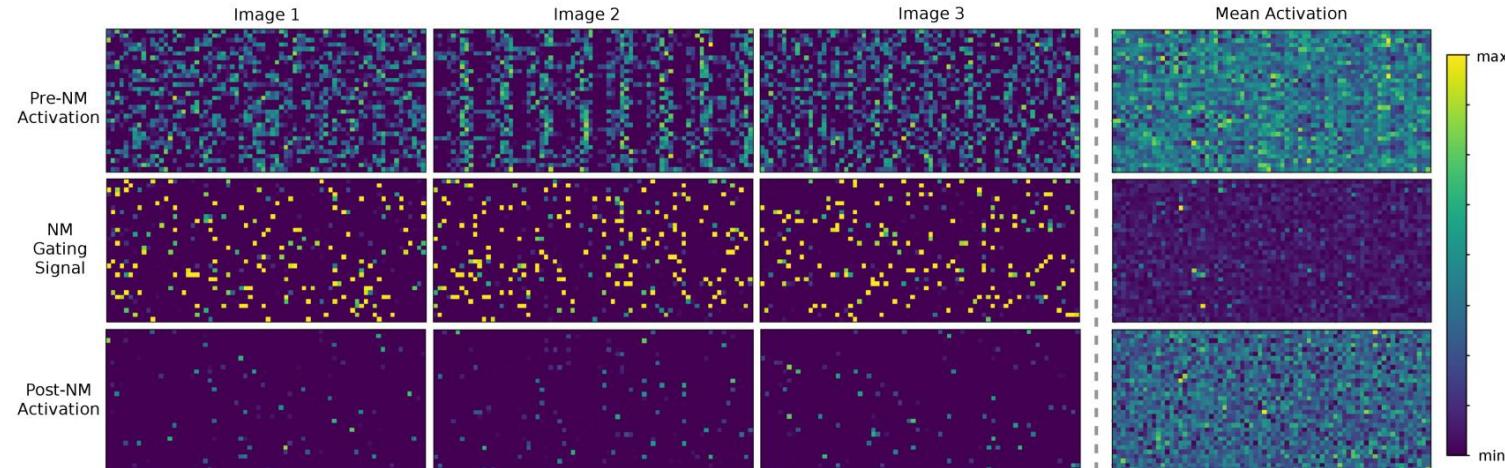
## How

- Generate a mask on last layer's activation via Modulation Network to



## Weakness

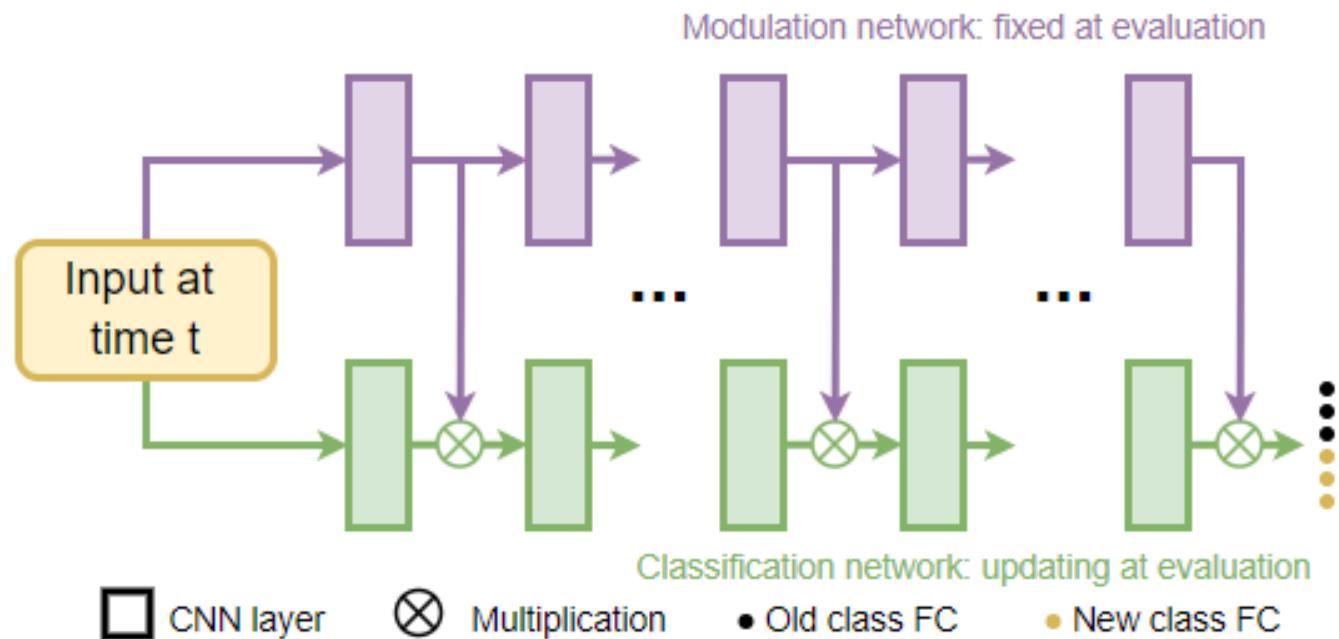
- Diminishing modulation effect with deeper networks
- Not old knowledge in Modulation



# Idea 3: Bi-directional Guided Modulation

## Our improvement A

- Modulate both early and later layers in classification network



Methods	Sessions (CIFAR100 w/ ResNet20)								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Baseline (Rep.)	74.33	67.23	63.18	59.24	56.03	53.05	50.66	48.69	46.47
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+Meta-learning (Init.)	74.45	70.05	65.97	61.76	58.78	55.92	53.80	51.77	49.41
+Modulation (Last)	74.46	70.08	66.65	62.06	58.88	55.58	53.28	51.12	48.34
+Modulation (Uniform)	74.49	70.08	<b>67.00</b>	62.45	59.38	56.29	54.08	52.02	49.67

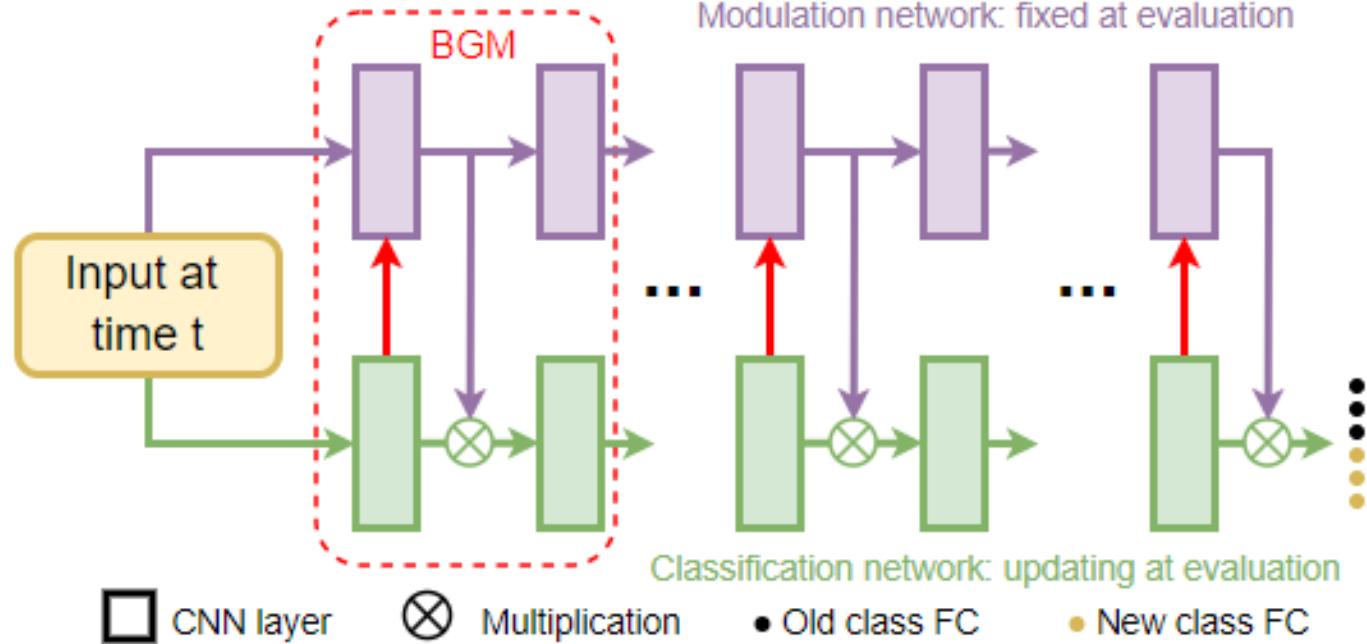
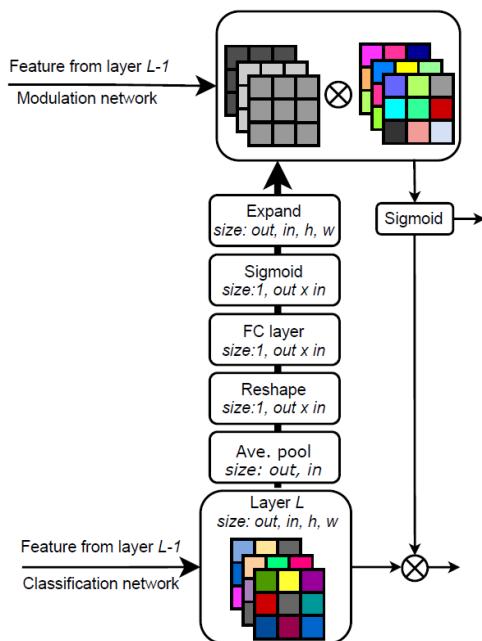
# Idea 3: Bi-directional Guided Modulation

## Our improvement A

- Modulate both early and later layers in classification network

## Our improvement B

- Incorporate old knowledge
- Add extra connections to guide Modulation Network



Methods	Sessions (CIFAR100 w/ ResNet20)								
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Baseline (Rep.)	74.33	67.23	63.18	59.24	56.03	53.05	50.66	48.69	46.47
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+BGM (Full model)	<b>74.50</b>	<b>70.10</b>	66.84	<b>62.77</b>	<b>59.48</b>	<b>56.52</b>	<b>54.36</b>	<b>52.56</b>	<b>49.97</b>

# Experiment Result: State-of-the-art

Methods	Venue	Sessions (MiniImageNet w/ ResNet18)									Average Acc	Final Impro.
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
TOPIC [26]	CVPR2020	61.31	50.09	45.17	41.16	37.48	35.52	32.19	29.46	24.42	39.64	+24.77
Zhu <i>et.al</i> [32]	CVPR2021	61.45	63.80	59.53	55.53	52.50	49.60	46.69	43.79	41.92	52.75	+7.27
Cheraghian <i>et.al</i> [4]	ICCV2021	61.40	59.80	54.20	51.69	49.45	48.00	45.20	43.80	42.1	50.63	+7.09
CEC [31]	CVPR2021	72.00	66.83	62.97	59.43	56.70	53.73	51.19	49.24	47.63	57.75	+1.56
MetaFSCIL (ours)	-	<b>72.04</b>	<b>67.94</b>	<b>63.77</b>	<b>60.29</b>	<b>57.58</b>	<b>55.16</b>	<b>52.9</b>	<b>50.79</b>	<b>49.19</b>	<b>58.85</b>	

Methods	Venue	Sessions (CIFAR100) w/ ResNet20									Average Acc	Final Impro.
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
TOPIC [26]	CVPR2020	64.10	55.88	47.07	45.16	40.11	36.38	33.96	31.55	29.37	42.62	+20.6
Zhu <i>et.al</i> [32]	CVPR2021	64.10	65.86	61.36	57.34	53.69	50.75	48.58	45.66	43.25	54.51	+6.72
Cheraghian <i>et.al</i> [4]	ICCV2021	62.00	57.00	56.7	52.00	50.60	48.8	45.00	44.00	41.64	50.86	+8.33
CEC [31]	CVPR2021	73.07	68.88	65.26	61.19	58.09	55.57	53.22	51.34	49.14	59.53	+0.83
MetaFSCIL (ours)	-	<b>74.50</b>	<b>70.10</b>	<b>66.84</b>	<b>62.77</b>	<b>59.48</b>	<b>56.52</b>	<b>54.36</b>	<b>52.56</b>	<b>49.97</b>	<b>60.79</b>	

Methods	Venue	Sessions (CUB200) w/ ResNet18										Average Acc	Final Impro.	
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9			
TOPIC [26]	CVPR2020	68.68	62.49	54.81	49.99	45.25	41.40	38.35	35.36	32.22	28.31	26.28	43.92	+26.36
Zhu <i>et.al</i> [32]	CVPR2021	68.68	61.85	57.43	52.68	50.19	46.88	44.65	43.07	40.17	39.63	37.33	49.32	+15.31
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MetaFSCIL (ours)	-	<b>75.90</b>	<b>72.41</b>	<b>68.78</b>	<b>64.78</b>	<b>62.96</b>	<b>59.99</b>	<b>58.30</b>	<b>56.85</b>	<b>54.78</b>	<b>53.82</b>	<b>52.64</b>	<b>61.92</b>	

# Experiment Result: Visualization

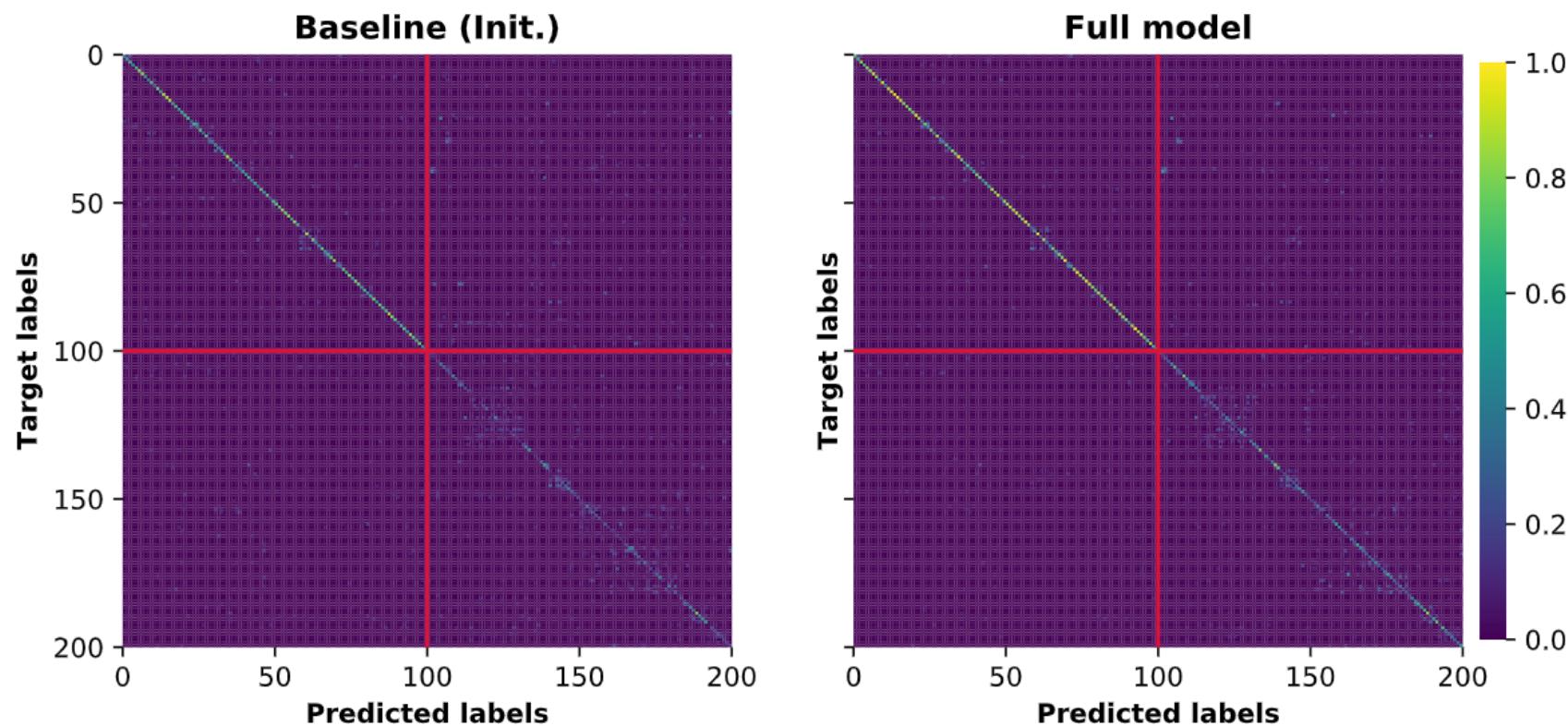


Figure 4. **Class-wise performance on CUB200 dataset.** The confusion matrices show that our method significantly improves the baseline for both *base* and *novel* classes (separated by red line).

# Experiment Result: From Meta Learning Perspective

## CEC

- Pre-trained backbone (representation) without updates during continual sessions
- Misaligned episode construction
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Ours is a full meta learning based FSCIL method

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Methods	MiniImageNet	CIFAR100	CUB200
CEC [31]	47.63	49.14	52.28
MetaFSCIL + CEC	48.95	49.71	52.64

Table 3. Integration of our meta-learned backbone with CEC.

# Summary

## Part 1: Introduction on Lifelong Learning

- Lifelong / continual learning can enable knowledge accumulation and quick adaptation in dynamically changing environments
- The main challenge in Lifelong learning is catastrophic forgetting (Plasticity – Stability dilemma)
- Three common strategies to address catastrophic forgetting
- Class incremental learning (CIL) is one category of Lifelong learning

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## Part 3: Our CVPR 2022 paper

- A full meta learning based method on FSCIL

# Q & A

# Methodologies on Few Shot Learning

