7   Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the experiments

Due to the governmental restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to conduct experiments in our institution's laboratory. Therefore, we decided to set up a robotics laboratory at home, building a smaller, 6-DOF manipulator with a parallel gripper: the TinkerKit Braccio. Despite the small size of this robot, we were able to conduct all the experiments successfully and answer the above questions, albeit with a reduced workspace. Nevertheless, the results obtained here can effortlessly be replicated on a larger robot.

A set of videos can be found on our website that show how the tasks and experiments we designed demonstrate the ability of our method to learn multi-stage tasks. The main difference between the robot we used and an industrial grade robot is the size of the workspace, the dexterity of the arm and its precision. We argue that, as demonstrated in [3], the use of an industrial grade robot could even improve the performance of our algorithm, and allow us to tackle more complex or precise tasks. As future work, we will extend our work and deploy it on the robots in our laboratory as soon as the governmental restrictions are relaxed.