



# Zero-shot Quantization: A Comprehensive Survey

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# Overview

- We survey **Zero-shot Quantization (ZSQ)**, a data-free model compression paradigm
  - ZSQ faces three key challenges: knowledge transfer, synthetic-real discrepancy, and task adaptability
- We categorize and review ZSQ methods in three main groups
  - Synthesis-free, generator-based, and noise-optimization
- We discuss current limitations and future directions
  - Improving synthetic dataset, theory, problem setting, and evaluation remain open research questions



# Outline

- ➡ ■ **Introduction**
- Problem Formulation
- Categorization
- ZSQ Algorithms
- Future Research Directions
- Conclusion

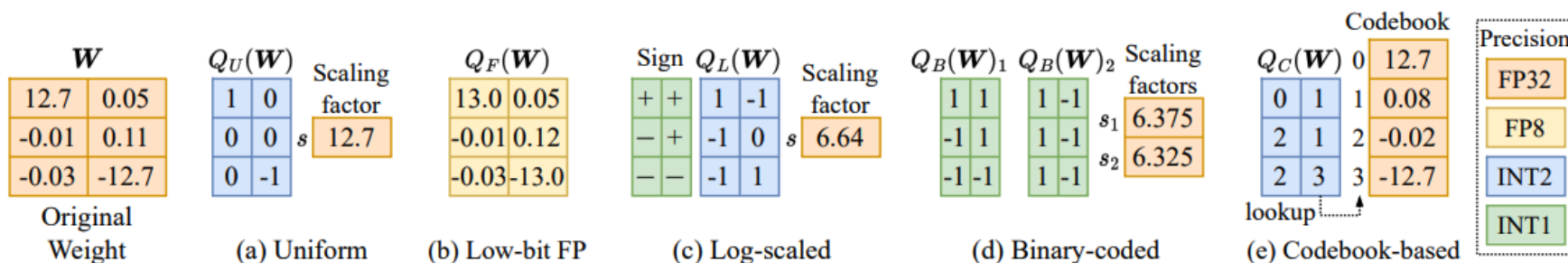


# Model Compression

- **Task:** Deploying neural networks on resource-constrained edge devices is challenging
- Various model compression techniques:
  - **Quantization**
  - Pruning
  - Knowledge distillation
  - Low-rank approximation
  - Parameter sharing
  - Efficient architecture design
  - and more...

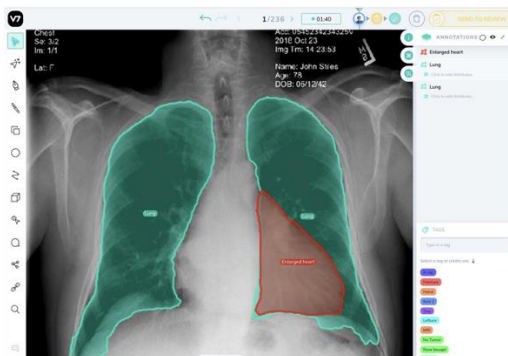
# Quantization

- Quantization methods represent a full-precision model with lower-bit formats
  - High compression and acceleration rate with minimal performance degradation
  - e.g., 32-bit model  $\rightarrow$  4-bit quantization: 8 $\times$  compression



# Zero-shot Quantization

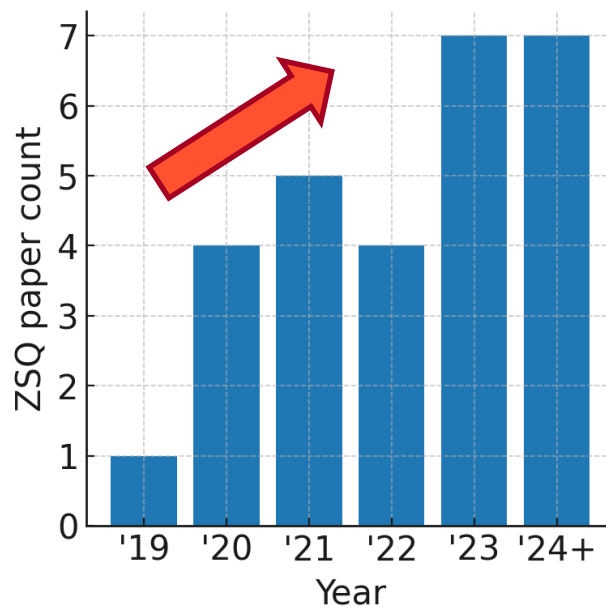
- Zero-shot Quantization (ZSQ) achieves quantization without requiring any real data
  - **Limitation of existing methods.** the dependence on training data
- Privacy or policy issues may block access to data
  - e.g., medical records, confidential business information





# Survey on ZSQ

- 25+ paper in major venues since DFQ [ICCV 2019]
  - Rapid growth in research
  - **Limitation.** Existing surveys focus on broader topics
    - e.g., model compression or network quantization





# Survey on ZSQ

- We conduct the first in-depth survey on ZSQ
  - **Formulation.** We formulate the ZSQ problem and explore three critical challenges
  - **Categorization.** We categorize ZSQ algorithms based on their data generation strategies
  - **Analysis.** We analyze current ZSQ algorithms, highlighting their motivations, ideas, and key findings
  - **Discussion.** We outline future research questions to guide research toward impactful advancements





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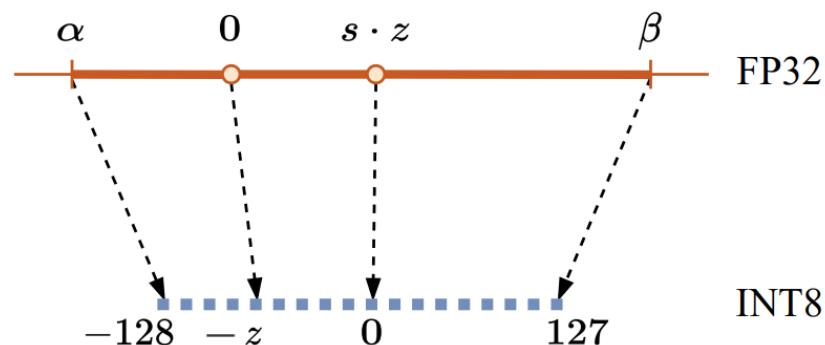
# Preliminaries

## Network Quantization

- Min-max Uniform Quantization (Input:  $\mathbf{W}, B \rightarrow$  Output:  $\mathbf{W}_q$ )

$$\mathbf{W}_q = \left\lfloor \frac{\mathbf{W}}{s} - z + \frac{1}{2} \right\rfloor, \quad s = \frac{\beta - \alpha}{2^B - 1}, \quad z = \frac{\alpha}{s} + 2^{B-1}$$

- $\mathbf{W}$ : weight matrix of the full precision model
- $\mathbf{W}^q$ :  $B$ -bit quantized matrix of  $\mathbf{W}$
- $B$ : quantization bits
- $s$ : scaling factor
- $z$ : integer offset
- $\alpha$ : minimum value in  $\mathbf{W}$
- $\beta$ : maximum value in  $\mathbf{W}$





# Preliminaries

## QAT and PTQ

- Quantization methods are classified into two settings by their need of additional fine-tuning
  - **QAT (Quantization-Aware Training)**. First quantize the model, then fine-tune the weight parameters
    - Rely on min-max quantization
  - **PTQ (Post-Training Quantization)**. No additional training required
    - e.g., adaptive rounding, block reconstruction, random dropping



# Problem Definition

## Zero-shot Quantization

### ■ Given

- A model  $\theta$  trained on a task  $\mathcal{T}$
- Quantization bits  $B$

### ■ Generate

- a quantized model  $\theta_q$  within the  $B$ -bit limit for maximum accuracy on  $\mathcal{T}$  **without the use of real data**



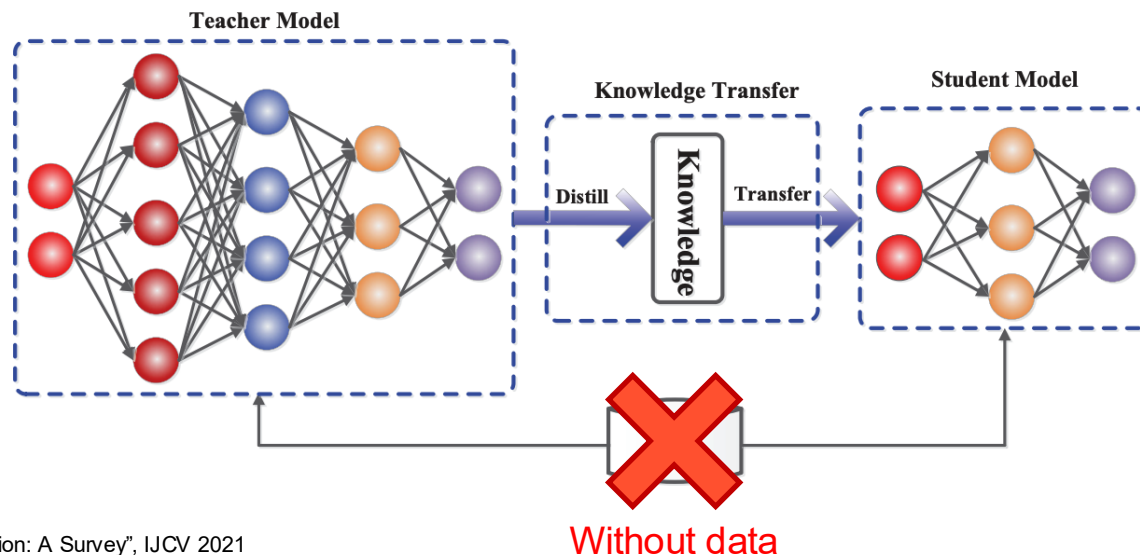
# Main Challenges of ZSQ

- ZSQ algorithms should overcome key challenges that arise due to the absence of real data
  - 1. Knowledge transfer from the pre-trained model
  - 2. Discrepancy between real and synthetic datasets
  - 3. Diversity of the problem setting

# Main Challenges of ZSQ

## Knowledge transfer from the pre-trained model

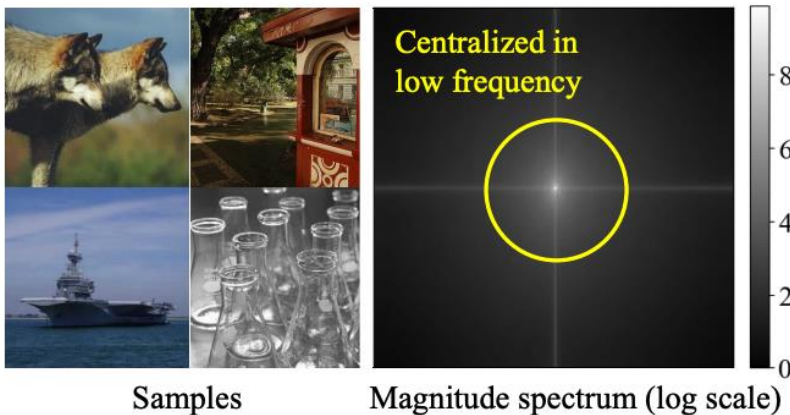
- How do we transfer knowledge without real data?
  - Quantized model must preserve original behaviors
  - **Challenge.** No real data for alignment or calibration
  - **Solution Direction.** Adapt *synthetic data*, distillation losses, or architectural constraints to mimic the original



# Main Challenges of ZSQ

## Discrepancy between real and synthetic datasets

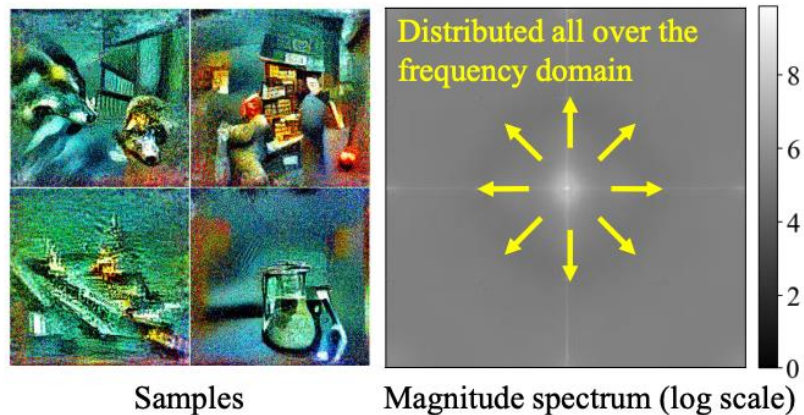
- Synthetic data doesn't match real data distributions
  - **Challenge.** Models quantized with synthetic data may underperform on real-world tasks
  - **Solution Direction.** Improving the quality of synthetic data or dataset reduces performance degradation
    - e.g., noise in image, intra-class heterogeneity



Samples

Magnitude spectrum (log scale)

(a) ImageNet dataset



Samples

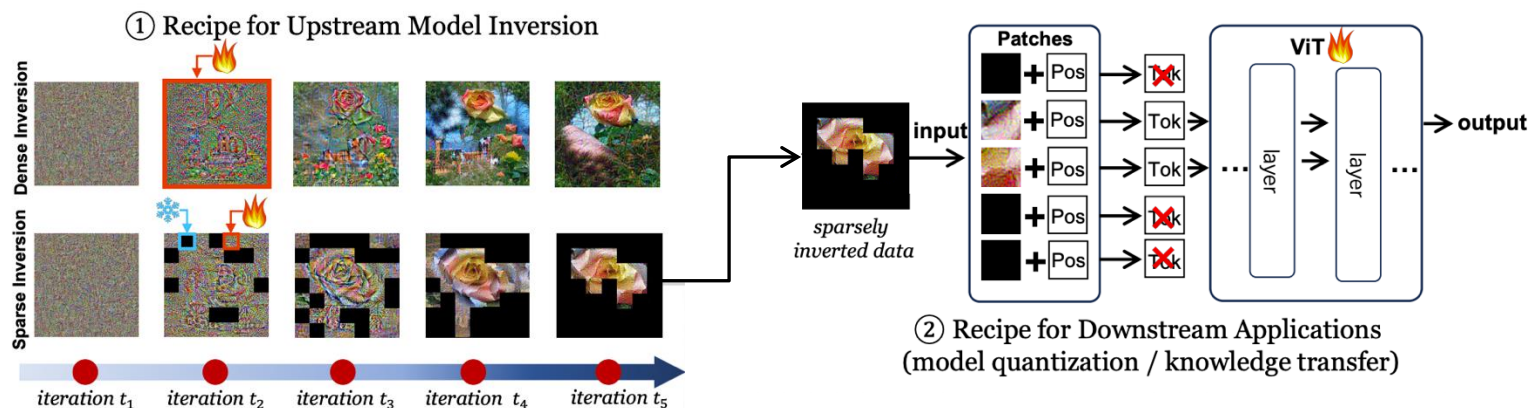
Magnitude spectrum (log scale)

(b) Synthetic dataset (TexQ)

# Main Challenges of ZSQ

## Diversity of the problem setting

- ZSQ should generalize to various architectures, tasks, and quantization bit-widths
  - **Challenge.** Some algorithms work only for specific settings
  - **Solution Direction.** Develop universal frameworks or adaptable techniques
    - e.g., ViT-specific method due to patch-wise operation





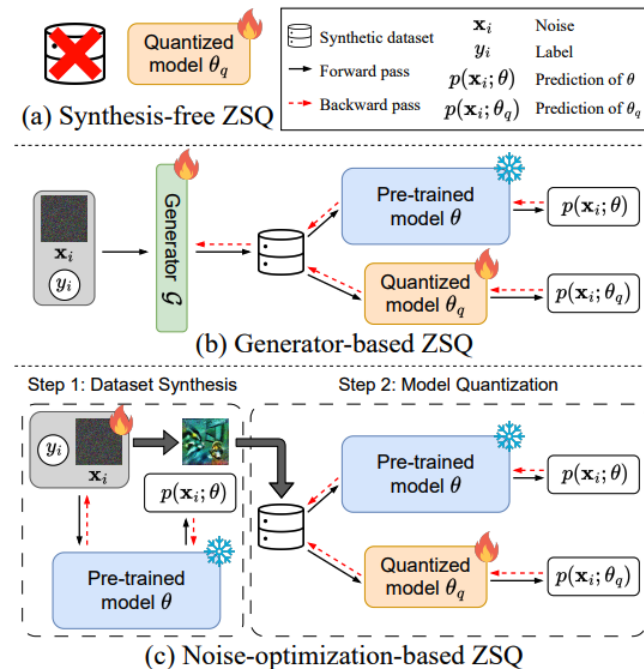


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# Taxonomy

- We categorize ZSQ algorithms based on their data generation approach as:
  - **Synthesis-free ZSQ**
    - Quantize models without generating any synthetic data
  - **Generator-based ZSQ**
    - Train an additional generator  $\mathcal{G}$  to produce synthetic data
  - **Noise-optimization-based ZSQ**
    - Directly optimize noise inputs to make synthetic data





# Taxonomy

- We summarize the key features of ZSQ methods
  - 1. Data Generation Approach

Synthesis-free

Generator-based

Noise-optimization

Method	Training Requirement	Scope of Contribution	Architecture	# Images	Accuracy (FP = 71.47)	
					W4A4	W3A3
DFQ [2019]	PTQ	Q	CNN	0	55.78	-
SQuant [2022]	PTQ	Q	CNN	0	66.14	25.74
UDFC [2023]	PTQ	Q	CNN	0	63.49	-
GDFQ [2020]	QAT	S, Q	CNN	1.28M	60.60	20.23
ZAQ [2021]	QAT	S, Q	CNN	1.28M	52.64	-
ARC [2021]	QAT	S, Q	CNN	1.28M	61.32	23.37
Qimera [2021]	QAT	S, Q	CNN	1.28M	63.84	1.17
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AdaSG [2023b]	QAT	S, Q	CNN	1.28M	66.50	37.04
AdaDFQ [2023a]	QAT	S, Q	CNN	1.28M	66.53	38.10
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RIS [2024]	QAT	S	CNN	1.28M	67.75	-
GenQ [2024b]	PTQ / QAT	S	CNN	1K <sup>§</sup>	69.77 <sup>§</sup>	-
DeepInversion [2020]	QAT	S	CNN	32	70.27*	64.28 <sup>†</sup>
IntraQ [2022]	QAT	S, Q	CNN	5.12K	66.47	45.51
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TexQ [2023]	QAT	S, Q	CNN	5.12K	67.73	50.28
PLF [2024]	QAT	Q	CNN	5.12K	67.02	-
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PSAQ-ViT [2022]	PTQ	S	ViT	32	71.56*	65.57 <sup>†</sup>
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# Taxonomy

- We summarize the key features of ZSQ methods
  - 2. Training Requirement

PTQ

QAT

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# Taxonomy

- We summarize the key features of ZSQ methods
  - 3. Scope of Contribution

S: Data  
Synthesis

Q: Network  
Quantization

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# Taxonomy

- We summarize the key features of ZSQ methods
  - 4. Architecture of the Target Network

CNN

ViT

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- We summarize the key features of ZSQ methods
  - 5. Performance with the Number of Synthetic Images

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Classification accuracy of a ResNet-18 model trained on ImageNet  
\* W8A8 on CIFAR-100  
† W8A8/W4A8 of DeiT-T



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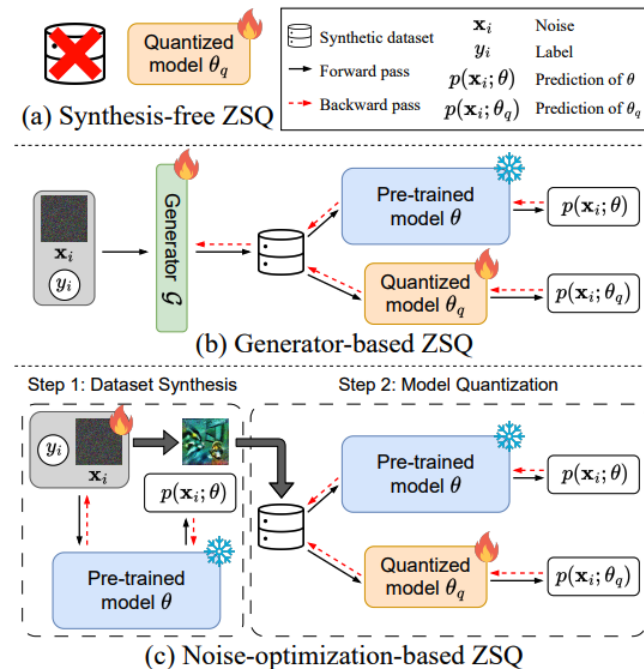
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# Taxonomy

## Revisited

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  - **Synthesis-free ZSQ**
    - Quantize models without generating any synthetic data
  - **Generator-based ZSQ**
    - Train an additional generator  $\mathcal{G}$  to produce synthetic data
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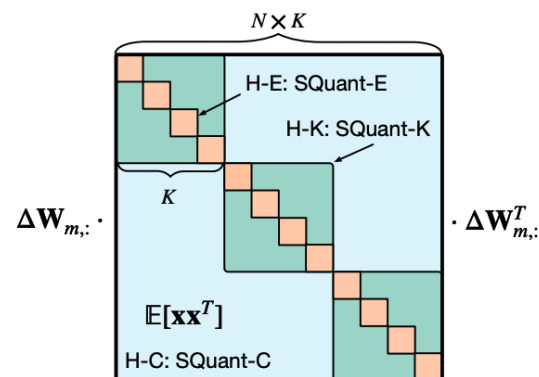




# ZSQ Algorithms

## Synthesis-free ZSQ

- **Synthesis-free ZSQ** methods compress a pre-trained model without generating any synthetic data
  - They leverage structural properties or theoretical foundations to mitigate performance degradation
  - **Representative method.** SQuant [ICLR 2022]
    - Evaluating the quantization error with the Hessian of each layer
    - Diagonal Hessian approximation for efficient computation

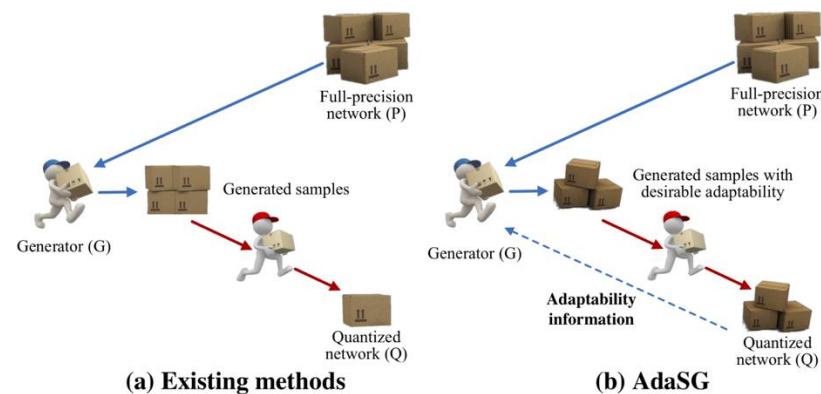


# ZSQ Algorithms

## Generator-based ZSQ

- **Generator-based ZSQ** employs an independent generator model  $\mathcal{G}$  to produce synthetic datasets
  - Generally, they train a GAN-based generator from scratch
  - **Representative method.** AdaSG [AAAI 2023]
    - Reformulating ZSQ into a zero-sum game between the generator  $\mathcal{G}$  and the quantized model  $\theta_q$  on reward  $\mathcal{R}(\cdot)$
    - Adversarial sample generation

$$\min_{\theta_q} \max_{\mathcal{G}} \mathcal{R}(\mathcal{G}, \theta_q)$$

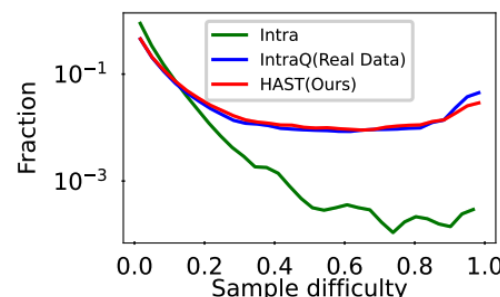
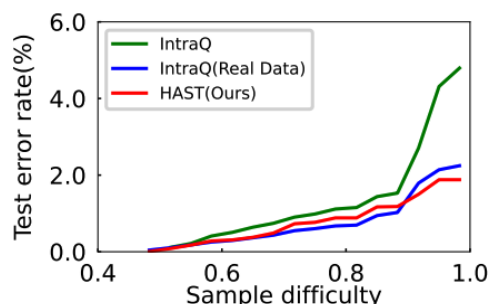




# ZSQ Algorithms

## Noise-optimization-based ZSQ

- **Noise-optimization-based ZSQ** directly optimizes noise to generate the dataset from iterative updates
  - They universally follow a two-step scheme:
    - 1. Dataset synthesis  $\rightarrow$  2. Model quantization
  - **Representative method. HAST** [CVPR 2023]
    - Previous methods perform poorly on difficult images, since their synthetic datasets lack challenging samples
    - Produce more samples difficult for both original / quantized models





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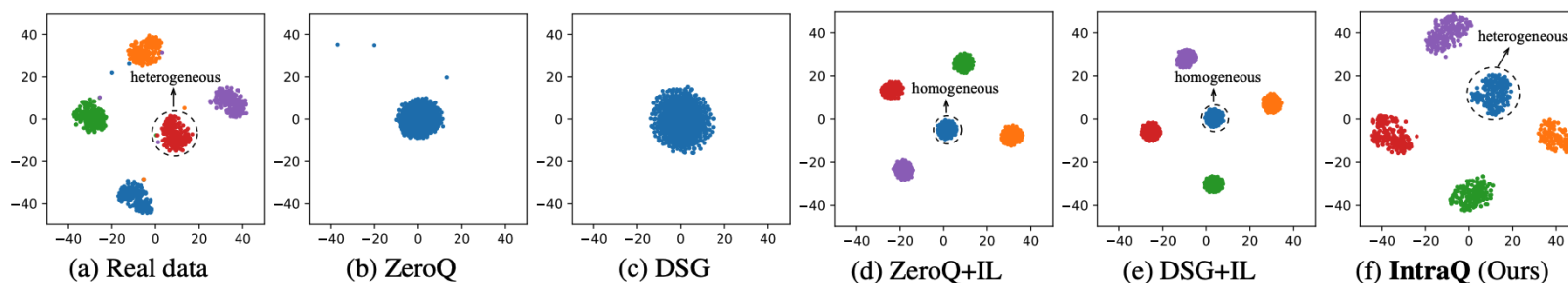
# Future Directions

- Research questions remain open for exploration
  - Synthetic datasets
    - 1. More principled analysis on synthetic datasets
    - 2. Faster generation of synthetic datasets
  - Theory
    - 3. Theoretical exploration of ZSQ
  - Problem setting
    - 4. Broader application to various tasks and domains
    - 5. Diverse problem settings
    - 6. Combining other model compression techniques
  - Evaluation
    - 7. Evaluating practical impact on real-world scenarios

# Future Directions

## Synthetic Datasets

- 1. More principled analysis on synthetic datasets
  - Most studies fix individual features instead of investigating their root causes
  - Deeper analysis may yield fundamental improvements

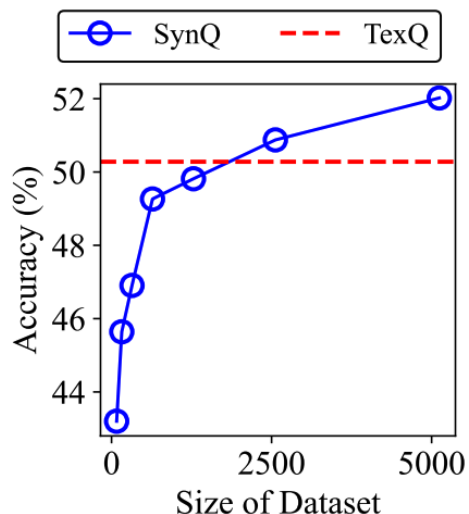




# Future Directions

## Synthetic Datasets

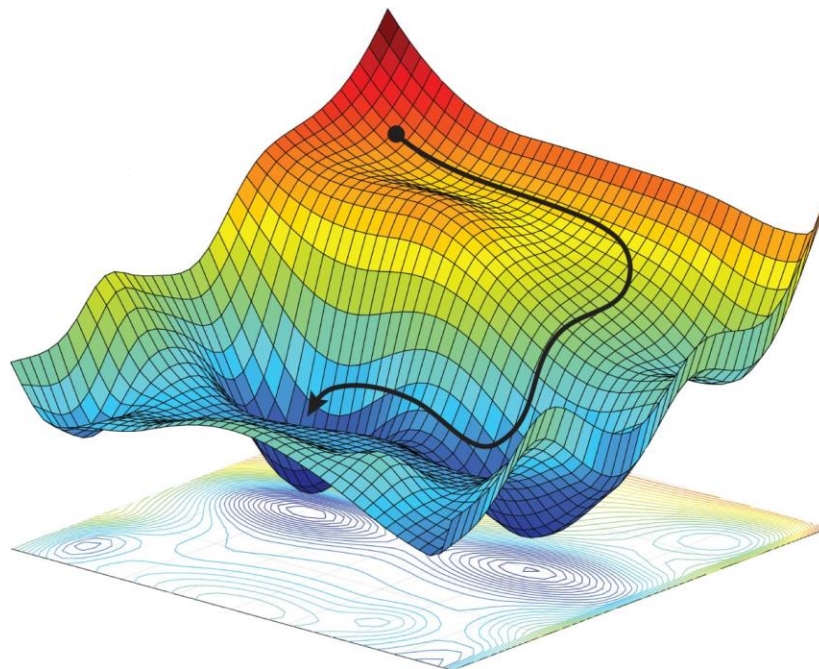
- 2. Faster generation of synthetic datasets
  - Increasing the size of synthetic datasets enhances the performance of quantized models
  - How can we reduce the generation time?
    - 1 to 4 GPU hours required to generate 5k  $224 \times 224$  images





# Future Directions Theory

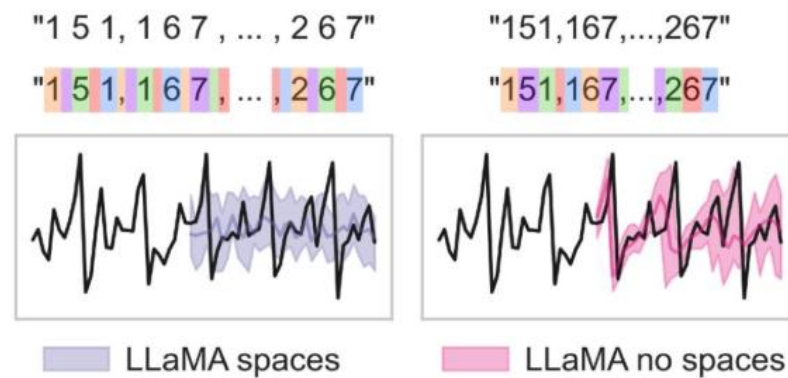
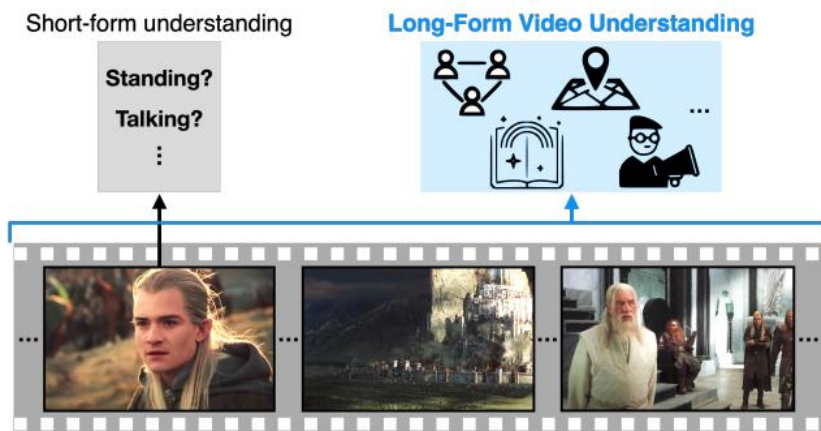
- 3. Theoretical exploration of ZSQ
  - ZSQ lacks formal understanding such as convergence guarantees or error bounds
    - Mathematical principles would guide towards robust algorithms



# Future Directions

## Problem Setting

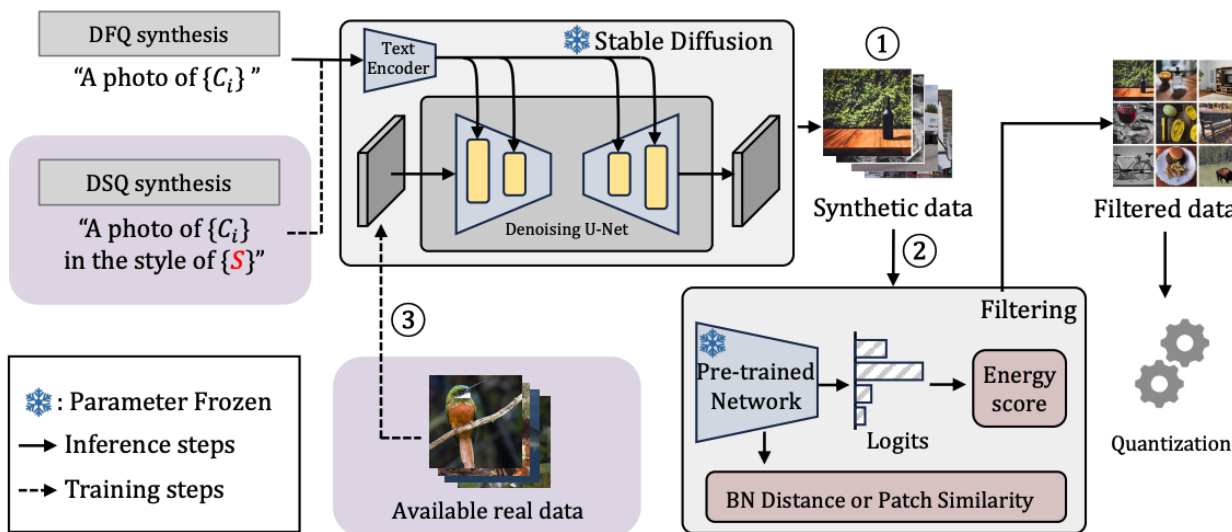
- 4. Broader application to various tasks and domains
  - Most research sets task  $\mathcal{T}$  as *image classification*, with a few work on *object detection*
  - Extending research to various tasks is crucial
    - Other vision tasks
    - Language, multi-variate, graph domains



# Future Directions

## Problem Setting

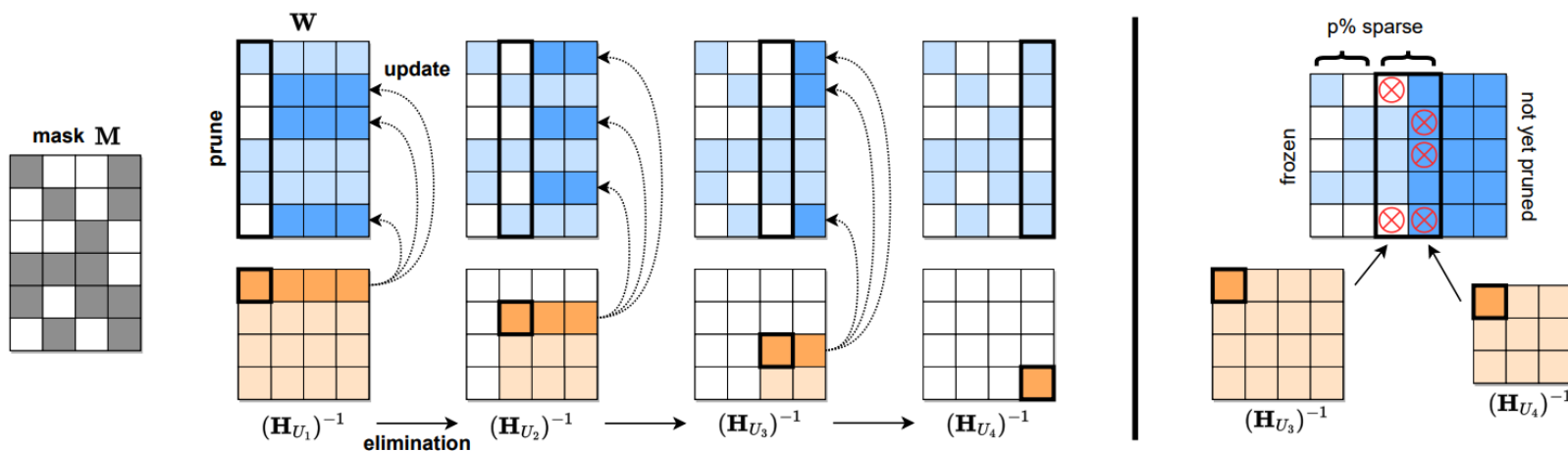
- 5. Diverse problem settings
  - Extending ZSQ to real-time quantization and edge-device deployments
    - e.g., few-instance quantization (1 to 10 real images), leveraging a pre-trained diffusion model for dataset synthesis



# Future Directions

## Problem Setting

- 6. Combining other model compression techniques
  - Current ZSQ algorithms achieve competitive results in 4-bit regime, but struggle in 3-bit or lower-bits
  - Integrating with other methods would help to achieve a higher compression rate while maintaining accuracy
    - e.g., pruning, weight sharing, low-rank approximation

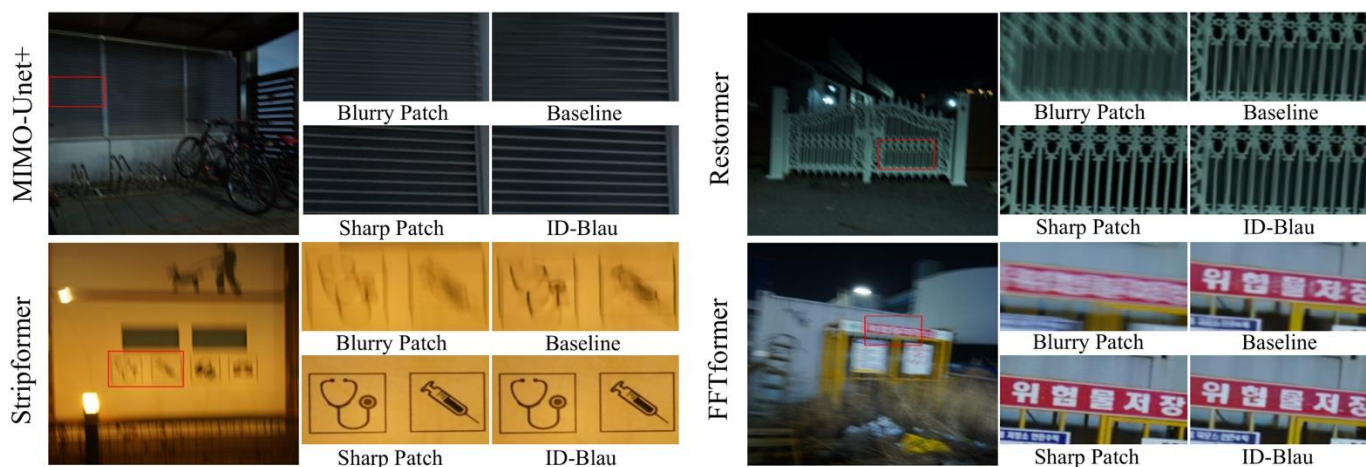


E. Frantar et al., "SparseGPT: Massive Language Models Can Be Accurately Pruned in One-Shot", ICML 2023

# Future Directions

## Evaluation

- 7. Evaluating practical impact on real-world scenarios
  - The importance of ZSQ lies in its applications for handling real-world scenarios with limited data
  - However, current ZSQ methods present experimental results solely on benchmark datasets and models





# Outline

- Introduction
- Problem Formulation
- Categorization
- ZSQ Algorithms
- Future Research Directions
- ➡ ■ **Conclusion**



# Conclusion

- We provide a comprehensive survey of ZSQ
  - ZSQ enables model compression without access to real data
- **Main Challenges**
  - **Knowledge transfer from the pre-trained model**
  - **Discrepancy between real and synthetic datasets**
  - **Diversity of the problem setting**
- Future work aims to improve synthetic data, theory, problem setting, and practical evaluation



# Thank you !

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Paper



GitHub

