COMP 322: Fundamentals of Parallel Programming

Lecture 30: Read-Write Locks, Linearizability

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Reading vs Writing

- Recall that the use of synchronization is to protect interfering accesses
  - —Concurrent reads of same memory: Not a problem
  - —Concurrent writes of same memory: Problem
  - —Concurrent read & write of same memory: Problem

So far:

- —If concurrent write/write or read/write might occur, use synchronization to ensure one-thread-at-a-time

But:

- —This is unnecessarily conservative: we could still allow multiple simultaneous readers (as in object-based isolation)

Consider a hashtable with one coarse-grained lock

- —Only one thread can perform operations at a time

But suppose:

- —There are many simultaneous `lookup` operations and `insert` operations are rare

java.util.concurrent.locks.ReadWriteLock interface

```
interface ReadWriteLock {
    Lock readLock();
    Lock writeLock();
  }
```

- Even though the interface appears to just define a pair of locks, the semantics of the pair of locks is coupled as follows
  - Case 1: a thread has successfully acquired writeLock().lock()
    - No other thread can acquire readLock() or writeLock()
  - Case 2: no thread has acquired writeLock().lock()
    - Multiple threads can acquire readLock()
    - No other thread can acquire writeLock()
- java.util.concurrent.locks.ReadWriteLock interface is implemented by java.util.concurrent.locks.ReadWriteReentrantLock class

Hashtable Example

```
class Hashtable<K,V> {
  …
  // coarse-grained, one lock for table
  ReentrantReadWriteLock lk = new ReentrantReadWriteLock();
  V lookup(K key) {
    int bucket = hasher(key);
    lk.readLock().lock(); // only blocks writers
    … read array[bucket] …
    lk.readLock().unlock();
  }
  void insert(K key, V val) {
    int bucket = hasher(key);
    lk.writeLock().lock(); // blocks readers and writers
   … write array[bucket] …
    lk.writeLock().unlock();
  }
}
```

Linearizability: Correctness of Concurrent Objects

- A *concurrent object* is an *object* that can correctly handle *methods* invoked *concurrently* by different tasks or threads
  —e.g., AtomicInteger, ConcurrentHashMap, ConcurrentLinkedQueue, …

- For the discussion of linearizability, we will assume that the body of each method in a concurrent object is itself sequential
  —Assume that methods do not create threads or async tasks

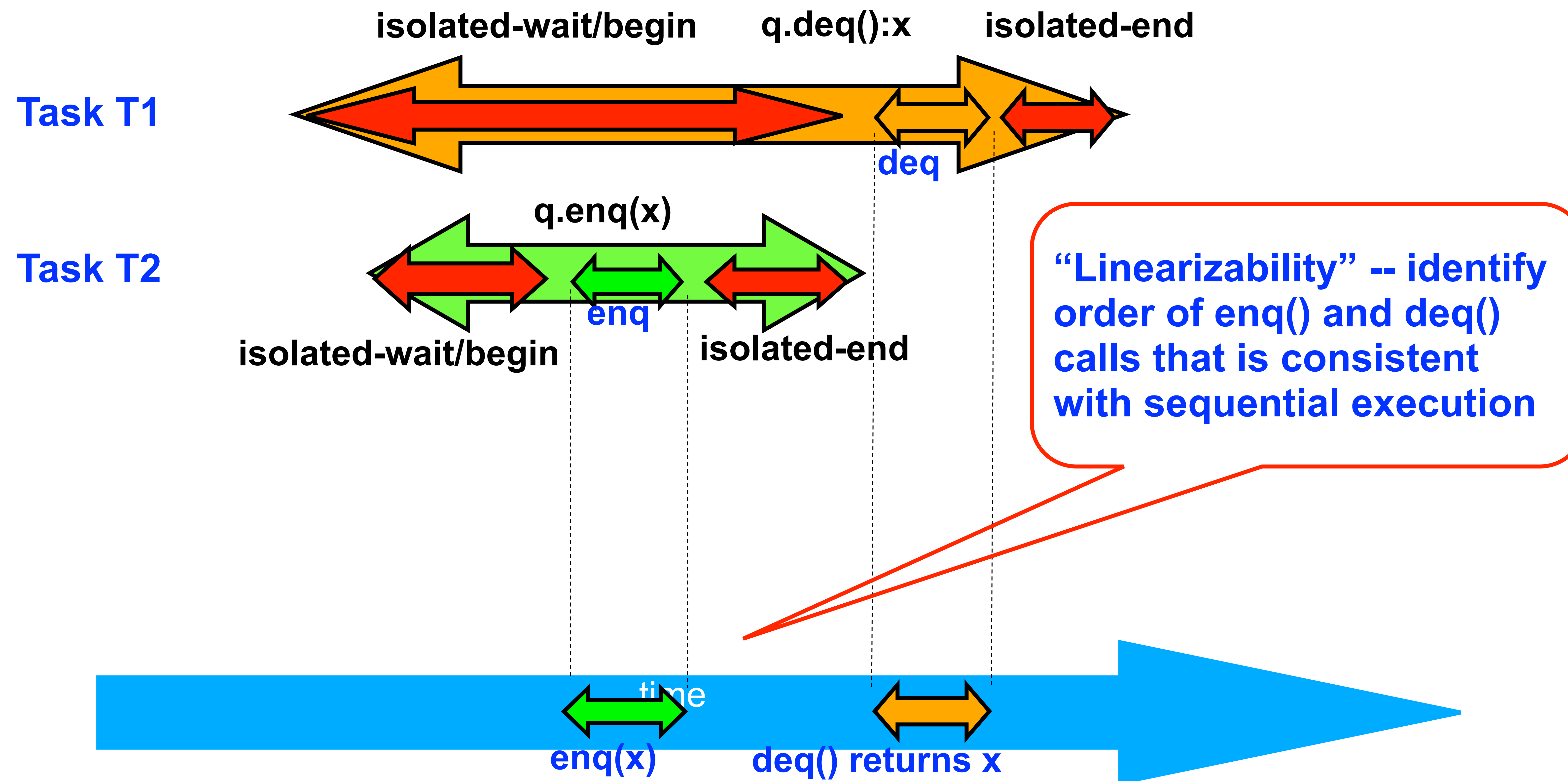
Linearizability: Correctness of Concurrent Objects

- Consider a simple FIFO (First In, First Out) queue as a canonical example of a concurrent object
  - Method q.enq(o) inserts object o at the tail of the queue
    - Assume that there is unbounded space available for all enq() operations to succeed
  - Method q.deq() removes and returns the item at the head of the queue.
    - Throws EmptyException if the queue is empty.

- Without seeing the implementation of the FIFO queue, we can tell if an execution of calls to enq() and deq() is correct or not, in a sequential program

- *How can we tell if the execution is correct for a parallel program?*

Linearization: Identifying a sequential order of concurrent method calls



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Informal Definition of Linearizability

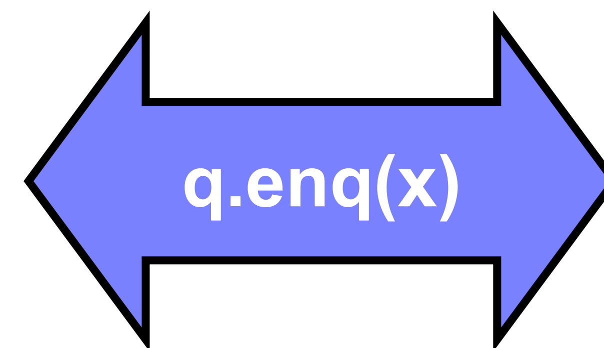
- Assume that each method call takes effect “instantaneously” at some point in time between its invocation and return.

- An *execution (schedule) is linearizable* if we can choose *one set of* instantaneous points that is consistent with a sequential execution in which methods are executed at those points
  - It’s okay if some other set of instantaneous points is not linearizable

- A *concurrent object is linearizable* if all its executions are linearizable
  - Linearizability is a “black box” test based on the object’s behavior, not its internals

Example 1

Task T1



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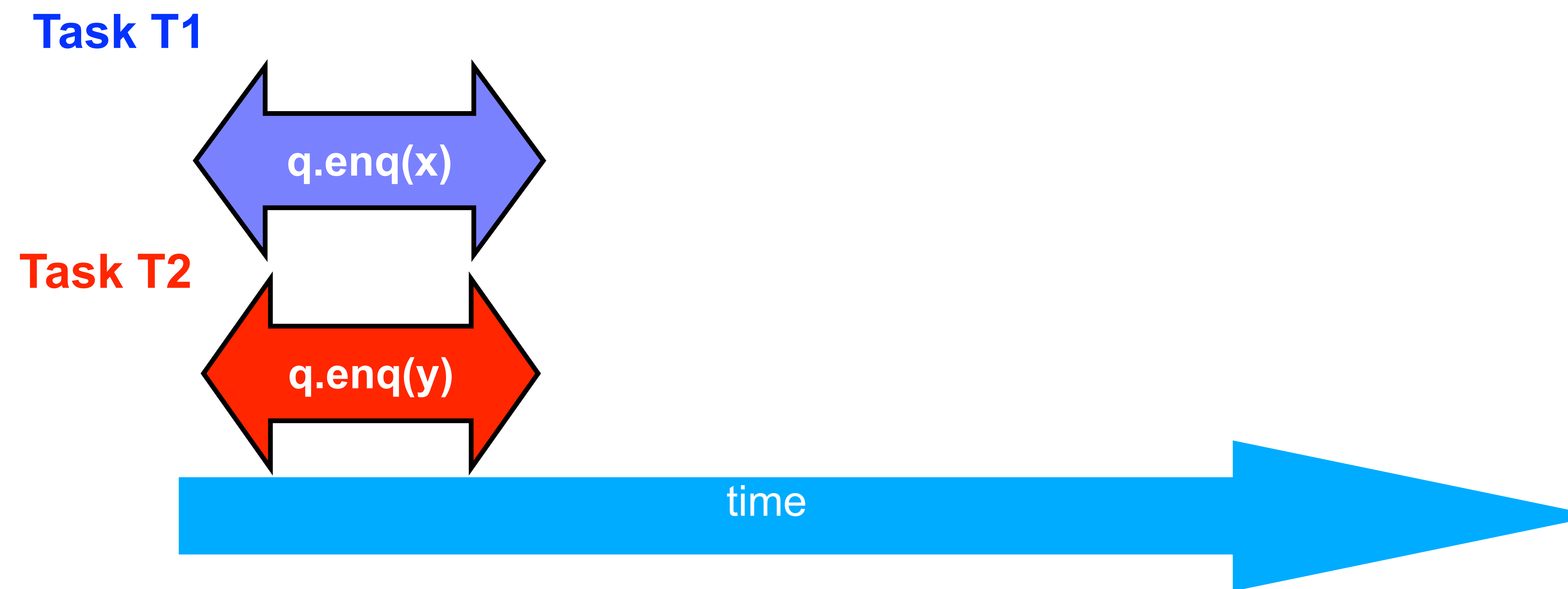
Example 1 cont.



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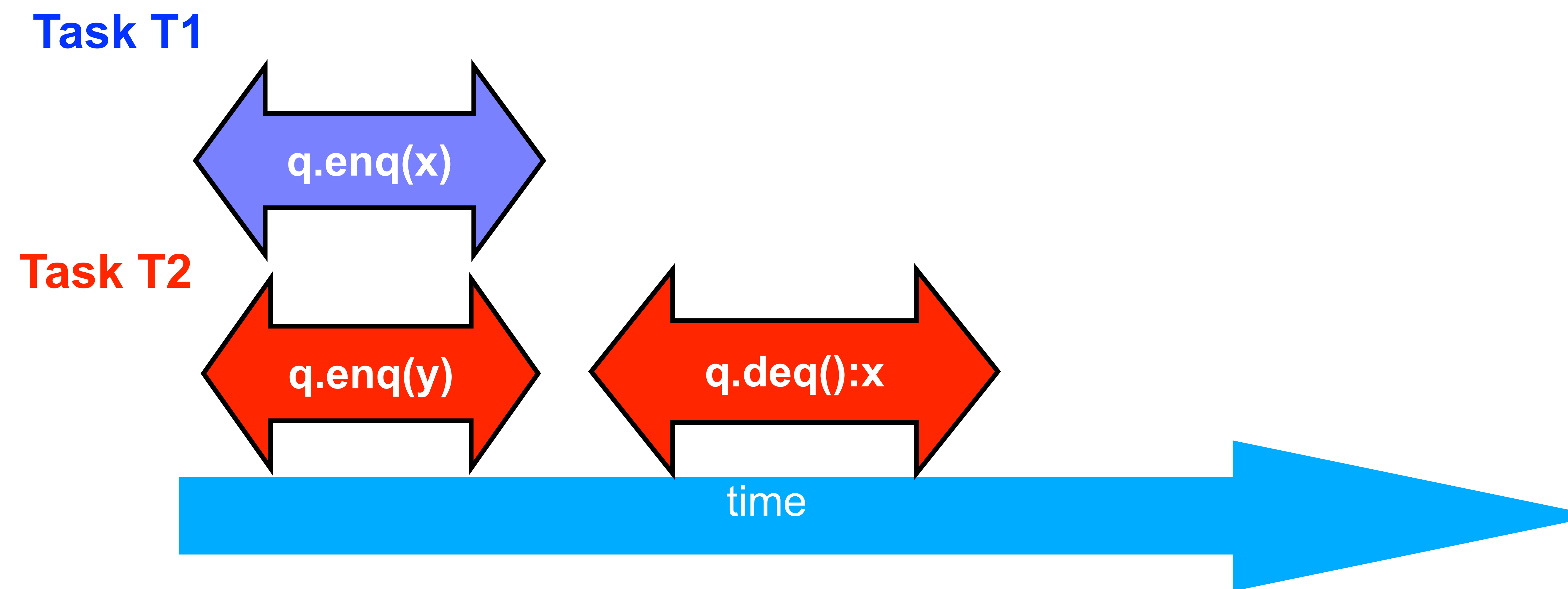
Example 1 cont.



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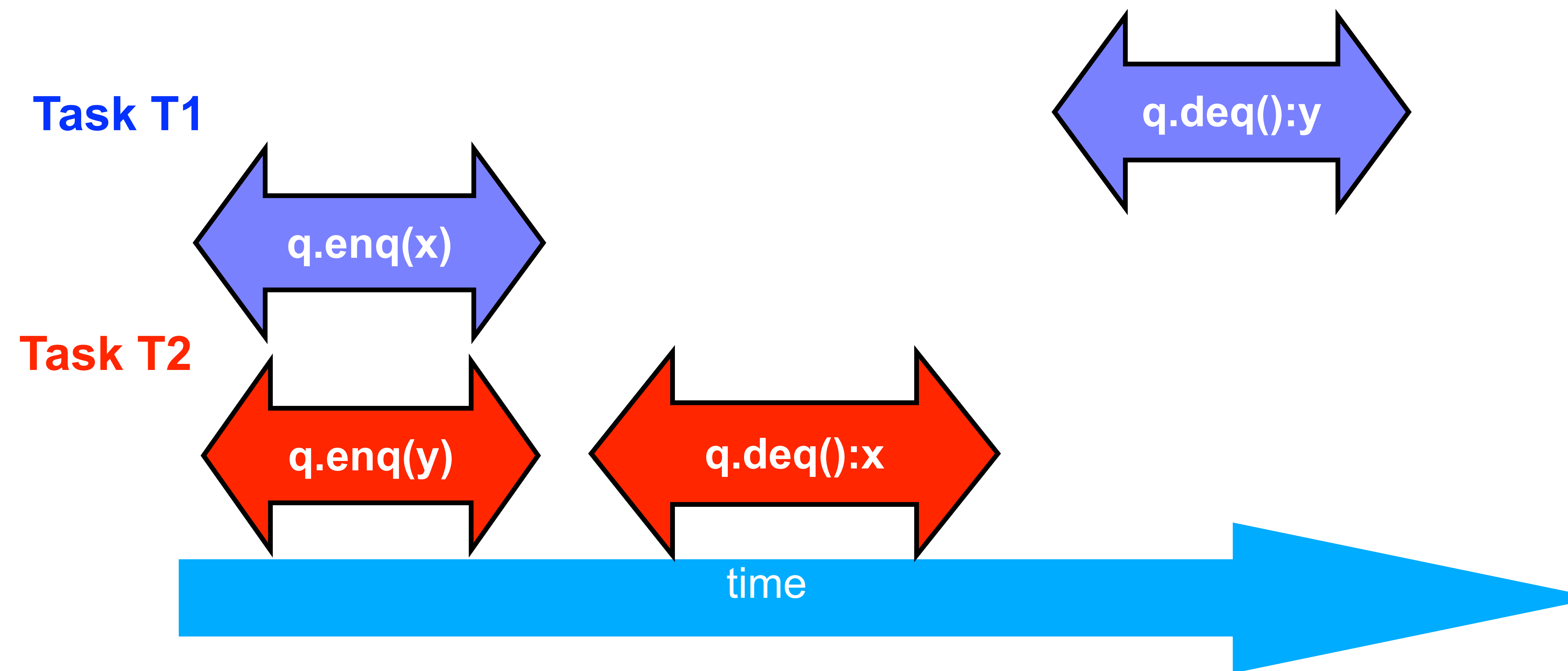
Example 1 cont.



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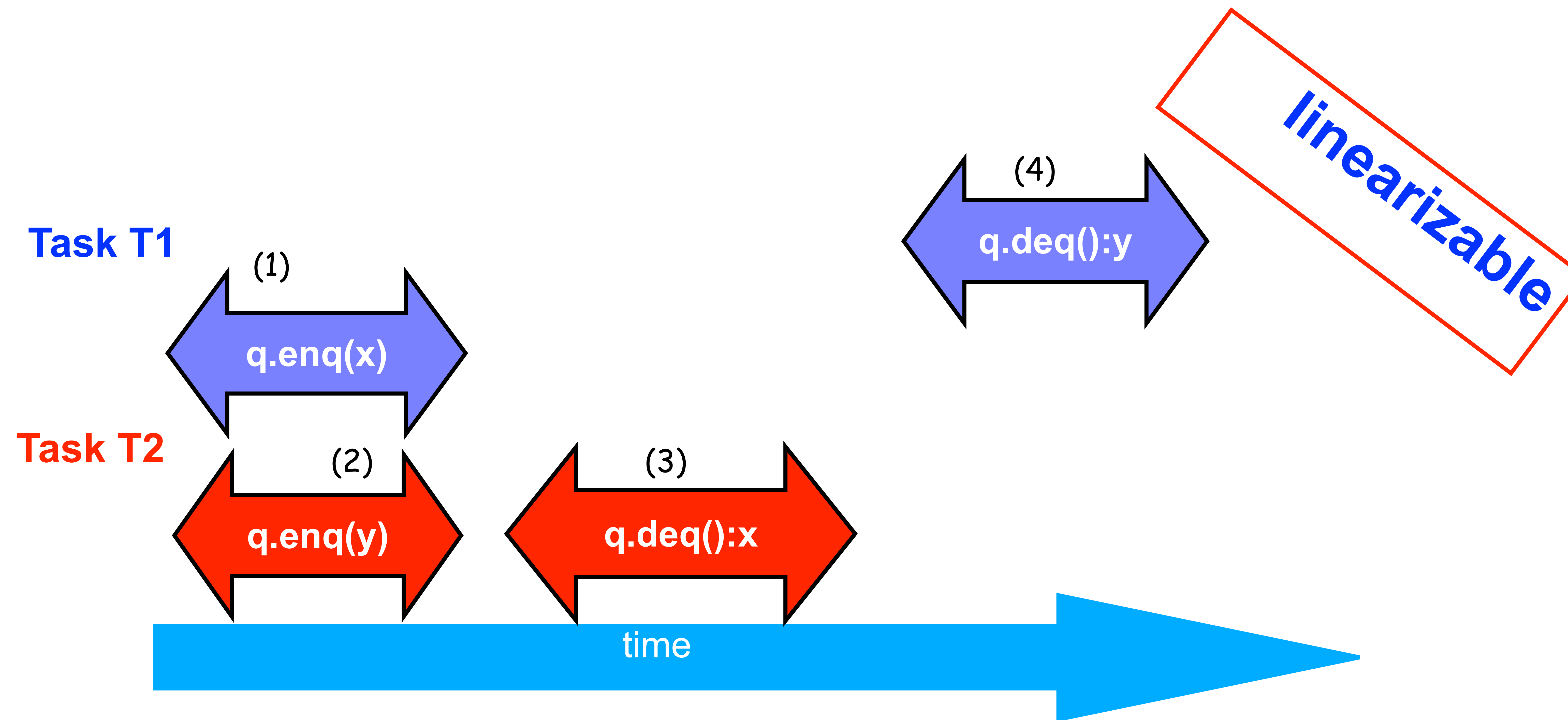
Example 1: is this execution linearizable?



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Example 2: is this execution linearizable?

Task T1

q.enq(x)

q.deq():y

Task T2

q.enq(y)

time

not linearizable

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Example 3

Is this execution linearizable? How many possible linearizations does it have?

q.enq(x)

q.enq(y)

q.deq():y

q.deq():x

time

linearizable

(two possible linearizations)

Example 4: execution of an isolated implementation of FIFO queue q

Is this a linearizable execution?

Time	Task A	Task B
0	Invoke `q.enq(x)`	
1	Work on `q.enq(x)`	
2	Work on `q.enq(x)`	
3	Return from `q.enq(x)`	
4		Invoke `q.enq(y)`
5		Work on `q.enq(y)`
6		Work on `q.enq(y)`
7		Return from `q.enq(y)`
8		Invoke `q.deq()`
9		Return `x` from `q.deq()`

Yes! Can be linearized as “q.enq(x) ; q.enq(y) ; q.deq():x”

Linearizability of Concurrent Objects (Summary)

Concurrent object

- A concurrent object is an object that can correctly handle methods invoked in parallel by different tasks or threads
  - —Examples: Concurrent Queue, AtomicInteger

Linearizability

- Assume that each method call takes effect "instantaneously" at some distinct point in time between its invocation and return.
- An execution is linearizable if we can choose instantaneous points that are consistent with a sequential execution in which methods are executed at those points
- An object is linearizable if all its possible executions are linearizable