

selection of probable words or other character strings which would logically be possible starting from the character of the first depressed key **14**.

[0023] Using the example of words of the English language, it will be apparent that depressing any one key **14** causes a group of words which start with the letter of the depressed key **14** to become possible candidates of being generated as text, to the exclusion of all words which start with other letters. The data processing system of the electronic device **10** may incorporate in digital form a look-up table, or electronic “dictionary” containing a database of words of the English language. Not only will the list of possible candidate words be limited to words starting with the letter of the key **14** that was depressed, the list of possible candidates may be further limited by known letter combinations. That is, for any one initial letter, only certain letters can follow when spelling out words in the English language. Therefore, the system can then predict the next letter which may be selected to generate text.

[0024] It has been stated that there are two principal ways of suggesting subsequent character candidates, the “dictionary” approach being one. The other principal way is based on history of usage of the electronic device **10**. The data processing system may enter usage into memory and identify those words or other character strings which have most often been entered into the electronic device **10**. The list of possible candidates may then reflect those words or other character strings which have historically most often been entered.

[0025] One of these two ways or the other one of the two ways may be used as the principal criterion, with the other way being invoked secondarily. This approach can be used to establish an order or hierarchy of candidates for suggestion.

[0026] Returning to explanation of the suggestive process, typically, in practice, several letters, rather than just one letter, are logical candidates to follow the first letter. The system suggests all possible logical candidates by making their corresponding keys **14** more visually conspicuous to the user of the electronic device **10**.

[0027] This may be done by visually increasing the size of the key **14** for each possible logical candidate letter or character. The data processing system may correspondingly reduce size of the key **14** for non-candidate letters or characters.

[0028] FIG. 2 shows an exemplary response to the key **14A** of the letter “H” being depressed. The system responds by visually enhancing the keys **14B**, **14C**, **14D**, **14E**, **14F**, and **14G**, which respectively correspond to the letters A, E, I, O, U, and Y. In the example of FIG. 2, the size of the displayed keys **14B** . . . **14F** has been increased by increasing the width but not the height. This procedure may be followed where for example it is desired to avoid intruding upon touch screen space which is devoted to other purposes, such as displaying entered text as that text is generated. It would be possible if desired to increase height also, or height rather than width if desired.

[0029] This procedure may also be employed to differentiate between unequal candidates. In the above example, if one letter is determined by the system to have more possibilities that it will succeed the “H” compared to the number of possibilities of another letter, then the switching area **14** of the letter having the greater number of possibilities may be visually enhanced to a degree greater than that of the letter with relatively fewer possibilities.

[0030] It will also be seen that the legends identifying the particular character corresponding to each one of the keys **14B** . . . **14F** has been rendered in bold font, relative to the other characters.

[0031] It would be possible to use other graphic treatments to achieve visual enhancing the keys **14**. As seen in FIG. 3, the color or other characteristic or characteristics of the background of keys **14** may be changed. In the example of FIG. 3, the background of the keys **14G**, **14H**, **14J**, and **14K** (corresponding respectively to the letters Y, W, R, and P) has been modified. This modification may comprise rendering the hue of each one of the keys **14G**, **14H**, **14J** and **14K** darker, by introducing hatching (as actually depicted), by introducing cross hatching, by introducing stippling, or by otherwise changing the appearance of the background so that by contrast, the background of the suggested keys **14C**, **14D**, **14E**, and **14F** is more conspicuous to the eye. The suggested keys **14C**, **14D**, **14E**, and **14F** may receive graphical treatment to make them more conspicuous, such as by causing their backgrounds to flash or pulse (this is represented as short lines radiating from the respective keys **14C** . . . **14F**), brighten, or otherwise become more conspicuous.

[0032] FIG. 3 illustrates another graphical treatment of keys beyond mere suggestion of appropriate or likely selections. That is, keys neighboring the suggested keys are highlighted or emphasized in some way as an aid in selecting suggested keys, but in a subordinated way that visually distinguishes neighboring keys from the suggested keys. This helps the user to depress the actual desired keys, while making those keys and the surrounding area more conspicuous and more easily manipulated.

[0033] FIG. 4 shows a further aspect of the invention illustrating another way of establishing three statuses of keys rather than two statuses. In FIG. 2, there are precisely two groups of keys **14**. One group comprises those keys **14** which are being suggested, and all of the suggested keys are given equal visual treatment within this first group. The second group comprises the non-suggested keys **14**, all of which are once again given equal visual treatment within the second group.

[0034] In FIG. 3, there are three levels of visual treatment or statuses. That is, the suggested keys **14C**, **14D**, **14E**, **14F** are enlarged and brightened; the adjacent non-suggested keys **14G**, **14H**, **14J**, and **14K** are enlarged and darkened; and the remaining keys **14L** and **14M** (which correspond to the letters Q and T) are neither enlarged nor brightened or darkened.

[0035] FIG. 4 shows another scheme of three levels of visual treatment or statuses. The keys **14C**, **14D**, **14E**, **14F** (corresponding to the letters E, U, I, and O) are enlarged; the keys **14H**, **14J**, **14K**, **14L**, **14M** (corresponding to the letters W, R, P, Q, T) are small in dimensions or footprint; and the key **14G** (corresponding to the letter Y) is of an intermediate size.

[0036] One possible usage for visually enhancing and especially for enlarging keys **14** which are adjacent to those keys **14** which are to be selected to form text is to facilitate transition of finger position from one selected key **14** to another selected key **14**. Again, invoking size adjustment enables a user to slide his or her finger to an adjacent switching area without releasing the screen, especially where the latter function is automatically invoked by the device **10**.

[0037] Using the above system and procedures, the invention may be regarded as a method **100** of presenting switching areas, such as those corresponding to the keys **14**, of a touch screen such as the touch screen **12** to an observer. The method