

accidentally focuses on exit but is still able to select an item, he/she may think that the action being triggered is something else.

[0060] Thus, as described for FIGS. 10 and 11, the detriments of the multi-focus behaviour of the UI control can be reduced by providing action specific functionality. This may be especially true when the multi-focus control provides a possibility to exit without doing anything. The action specific functionality consists of two parts: visual hints and automatic focus management.

[0061] 1. Visual Hints:

[0062] When the user changes the focus of action to exit, the focus on the item list can be dimmed. More generally, it is possible to dim all the items in the list that the currently focused action has no effect to. In the case of exit, this would mean dimming all the items.

[0063] 2. Automatic Focus Management

[0064] When the focus of action is on exit (and the list of items is dimmed), the user may still want to select an item and hence most probably trigger some action on it. In this case, the user can directly use the normal mechanism for selecting focus on an item. This automatically changes the focus of action away from exit to the default action.

[0065] There may be many advantages to visual hints, as for example, the user being capable of seeing that a currently focused-upon action is not targeted to be operable with some specific item in the list. Also, it becomes visually quite clear that a focused-upon action has changed. An advantage of the automatic focus management includes providing for the user to not have to first move the action focus away from any action before being able to select an item.

[0066] In general portable communication devices are becoming more complex, yet it remains desirable to keep the user input mechanisms as simple as possible. Hence the use of multi-focus controls may be an attractive alternative.

[0067] This may more particularly apply to user interfaces with complex functionality but limited input capability, one such example being the clamshell type of phones. The user interface (UI) style of clamshell phones is limited by the physical input capability of the phone when the cover UI is active, i.e., when the lid of the clamshell is closed. The main way of navigating and making selections in such a UI system is to use only a 4- or 5-way button or joystick (5-way is 4 directions plus a middle button). Thus, this invention may be easily applied to user interfaces with complex functionalities but limited input capabilities, particularly such as in clamshell phones.

[0068] All of these alternative embodiments may be contrasted to prior navigation and operation systems, where commands are usually in a menu structure, as most user interfaces are mainly based on navigation with lists and initiating the commands from the menu, and, the selection key provides the primary function or a menu subset list. However, it may sometimes have been unclear for the user what function is performed with the selection key. The advantages here are efficiency and obvious presentation of the available primary functions.

[0069] In a basic case, the phone(s) 1 are operable by a user, as per the keypad inputs 2 (including for example one or more of the keys 7, 8 and/or 9) to send controlling commands through use of the buttons/keys of the mobile unit or a joystick on the phone, if available. Changes may also be effected by pressing keys/buttons dedicated for such purpose. Instead of using the special selection keys for moving and selecting functions, alphanumeric keys as otherwise integrated in the phone may be implemented for this additional purpose according to other embodiments of the invention.

[0070] An application could or would also be run by software on the phone 1 and may establish or have established rules and/or situations generally for operation. An Application Program Interface (API) may then handle the connectivity between the program application and the user interface, particularly handling the inputs communicated therethrough and the outputs presented thereto.

[0071] It may further be noted that the highlight representations, icons or words, displayable as described above may be displayable simply on relatively blank backgrounds, or may be more intricately shown in relation to enriched environments. The environments may in simpler embodiments show mere selection alternatives, e.g. (simple line drawings), or may be more richly engendered (artistically or using pictorial reproductions of true backgrounds). Moreover, in more adapted versions, the backgrounds can be further active as for example being functional and/or reflective/representative of functionality through particular depictions on the display 3 of the phone 1. The highlight area/environment may have toggle effects for seeing larger or smaller or more or less magnified versions of the highlighted item, information, rules or functions, or the like. The user can then both see the icon being controlled or at least a representation of the highlighted area/environment for the selected item on the display screen.

[0072] Note, an API (application interface) between the program application and the user interface may provide the logistics, as for example to control endpoint services, inter alia. The API may also control the moving of data to and from the user interface or from the application to another software application or database or even to other communication devices, e.g., to and from other phones. Other API functionalities on the phone side may include implementation, i.e., accessing and controlling different applications. Such an API may also provide the connection logistics, as in providing a continuous observation of network connectivity and maintaining the connectivity, e.g., the disconnections may be automatically reconnected. The API may also provide an application interface between one or more phones and third party accessories, and/or other environment devices.

1. A method of operation of a mobile communication device; the method comprising:

providing an operable display area on a mobile communication device;

displaying an array of one or more selectable items in said operable display area; and,

simultaneously displaying a corresponding array of one or more features associated with a corresponding one of said one or more selectable items;