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(54) Title: METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR BANDWIDTH-EFFICIENT REMOTE PROCEDURE CALLS

(57) Abstract:

METHODS AND SYSTEMS FOR BANDWIDTH-EFFICIENT REMOTE PROCEDURE CALLS

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention relates generally to communications between computing devices over a network and, more particularly, to an approach for efficient usage of network resources, particularly bandwidth, when a first computing device calls functions to be executed on a second computing device.

BACKGROUND

10 In the entertainment world, it has become commonplace to offer real-time or near-real-time delivery of voice, music, video and other forms of data over private and public data networks.

While users can obtain much enjoyment by using their computing devices to passively receive the aforementioned forms of media over a network, a superior user experience

15 can be enabled when the user is allowed to influence or otherwise participate in what is being delivered. An often-cited example is IPTV, where user input is monitored and used to adapt the nature of the television signal being delivered to the user, typically over a private data network that provides a guaranteed bandwidth. A different example is Skype, where users participate in a video or audio conference that is supported over

20 the Internet rather than over a private data network.

The video game industry also has much to offer by harnessing the power of the Internet. As Internet connections become faster and more reliable, it becomes feasible to transmit larger amounts of graphics generated at a central source to participants in a video game. Moreover, because images are rendered in the “cloud”, users can use

25 ordinary PCs, tablets or smartphones to partake in the gaming experience, thus bypassing the need for expensive video game consoles. This is known as a cloud gaming system.

In a cloud gaming system, the computational burden is shifted to the game provider. However, the game provider's resources available are not limitless. From a practical

30 perspective, limits on computational resources can impact the realism of the game or the number of users who can concurrently play a version of the game at any given time, or both.

To handle the added computational burden of a cloud-based solution, some cloud gaming providers are shifting to a model in which the game state is monitored by one computer and rendering is carried out by another computer. To achieve rendering, a rendering command is placed by the game state computer and executed by the rendering computer. However, this configuration places demands on the interconnection bandwidth between the two computers, and therefore it becomes of importance to efficiently use this bandwidth when remotely executing rendering commands. Similar considerations apply to other industries where remote procedure calls are used in high volume.

10 **SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

Various non-limiting aspects of the invention are set out in the following clauses:

1. A method for execution by a local device connectable to a remote device, the method comprising:

obtaining at least one instruction for execution by the remote device;

15 creating a packet representing the at least one instruction; and

releasing the packet towards the remote device;

wherein creating the packet comprises:

consulting a memory to determine whether a packet index has already been assigned to the at least one instruction;

20 when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the packet index.

2. The method according to clause 1, wherein the at least one instruction comprises an identifier of a function for execution by the remote device and a combination of parameters for use in execution of the function.

3. The method according to clause 2, wherein to determine whether a packet index has already been assigned to the at least one instruction comprises determining whether a packet dictionary in the memory comprises an entry corresponding to the identifier of the function and the combination of parameters.

4. The method according to clause 2, wherein creating the packet further comprises:

when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not contain the identifier of the function or any of the parameters in the combination of parameters.

5. The method according to any one of clauses 1 to 4, wherein the at least one instruction is issued by an application running on the local device.
6. The method according to clause 5, wherein the application is a game state management process.
7. The method according to any one of clauses 1 to 6, wherein the at least one instruction comprises at least one instruction for rendering at least part of a game screen of a video game.
10. The method according to any one of clauses 1 to 7, wherein the at least one instruction comprises at least one instruction for fetching a leaderboard for the video game.
9. The method according to any one of clauses 1 to 7, wherein the at least one instruction comprises at least one instruction for finding other players of the video game.
15. The method according to any one of clauses 1 to 7, wherein the at least one instruction comprises at least one instruction for retrieving game news about the video game.
10. The method according to any one of clauses 1 to 7, wherein the at least one instruction comprises at least one instruction for retrieving game news about the video game.
20. 11. The method according to any one of clauses 1 to 10, wherein the obtaining, creating and releasing are executed by a first marshalling process running on the local device, wherein the at least one instruction comprises at least one first instruction, wherein the first device is a first local device, and wherein the method further comprises additional steps executed by a second marshalling process running on a second local device, the additional steps comprising:
 - obtaining at least one second instruction for execution by the remote device;
 - creating a second packet representing the at least one second instruction; and
 - releasing the second packet towards the remote device;wherein creating the second packet comprises:
 - 30. consulting the memory to second determine whether a second packet index has already been assigned to the at least one second instruction;

when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the second packet index.

12. The method according to clause 11, wherein the first and second packet indexes are identical when the first and second instructions are identical.

5 13. The method according to clause 11 or clause 12, wherein the memory is a memory space that is shared by the first and second local devices.

14. The method according to clause 11, wherein the at least one first instruction comprises an identifier of a first function for execution by the remote device and a first combination of parameters for use in execution of the first function and wherein the at least one second instruction comprises an identifier of a second function for execution by the remote device and a second combination of parameters for use in execution of the second function.

10 15. The method according to clause 14, wherein creating the second packet further comprises:

15 when the second determining is positive, formulating the second packet so that it does not contain the identifier of the second function or any of the parameters in the second combination of parameters.

16. The method according to clause 2, wherein the determining is first determining, and wherein creating the packet further comprises:

20 when the first determining is negative:
consulting the memory to second determine whether a parameter index has already been assigned to the combination of parameters;
when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the parameter combination index.

25 17. The method according to clause 16, wherein creating the packet further comprises:
when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not contain any of the parameters.

18. The method according to clause 2, wherein the determining is first determining, and wherein creating the packet further comprises:
30 when the first determining is negative:

consulting the memory to second determine whether a parameter index has already been assigned to each of the individual parameters in the combination of parameters;

when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it 5 contains the parameter index for each the parameters in the combination of parameters.

19. The method according to clause 18, wherein creating the packet further comprises:

when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not contain any of the parameters.

10 20. The method according to clause 19, wherein creating the packet further comprises:

when the second determining is positive:

assigning a parameter combination index to the combination of parameters; and

storing the parameter combination index in the memory in association with 15 the combination of parameters.

21. The method according to clause 20, wherein the assigning is carried out in accordance with a process that is known to the remote device.

22. The method according to clause 20, wherein creating the packet further comprises:

when the second determining is positive:

20 formulating the packet so that it further contains the parameter combination index.

23. The method according to clause 1, wherein creating the packet further comprises:

when the determining is negative:

25 identifying one or more parameters that are not associated with previously assigned parameter indexes;

for each of the one or more parameters, assigning a respective parameter index and storing the respective parameter index in a parameter index table in association with the parameter.

24. The method according to clause 23, wherein the assigning is carried out in

30 accordance with a process that is known to the remote device.

25. The method according to clause 23, wherein creating the packet further comprises:

when the determining is negative:

formulating the packet so that it contains each of the one or more parameters.

26. The method according to clause 25, wherein creating the packet further comprises:
when the determining is negative:

5 formulating the packet so that it further contains the parameter index
associated with each of the one or more parameters.

27. The method according to clause 25, wherein creating the packet further comprises:
when the determining is negative:

10 identifying one or more parameters to which a parameter index has already
been assigned;

 formulating the packet so that it further contains the parameter index
associated with each of the one or more parameters.

28. The method according to clause 27, wherein when the packet is formulated, it does
not contain any of the one or more parameters to which a parameter index had
15 already been assigned.

29. The method according to any one of clauses 1 to 28, wherein releasing the packet
comprises placing the packet in an output queue of a communication unit.

30. The method according to any one of clauses 2, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22,
wherein the identifier of the function for execution by the remote device is encoded
20 in at least one of the parameters.

31. An apparatus connectable to a remote device, the apparatus comprising:
an interface for obtaining at least one instruction for execution by the remote
device;

25 a processing unit for creating a packet representing the at least one instruction
and for releasing the packet via the interface towards the remote device;

 a memory comprising a shared packet dictionary;

 wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is configured for:

 consulting the shared packet dictionary to determine whether a packet
index has already been assigned to the at least one instruction;

30 when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it
contains the packet index.

32. The apparatus according to clause 31, wherein the at least one instruction comprises an identifier of a function for execution by the remote device and a combination of parameters for use in execution of the function.

33. The apparatus according to clause 32, wherein to determine whether a packet index has already been assigned to the at least one instruction, the processing unit 5 is configured for determining whether the shared packet dictionary comprises an entry corresponding to the identifier of the function and the combination of parameters.

34. The apparatus according to clause 32, wherein to create the packet, the processing 10 unit is further configured for:

when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not contain the identifier of the function or any of the parameters in the combination of parameters.

35. The apparatus according to clause 31, wherein the processing unit is further 15 configured for running an application that issues the at least one instruction.

36. The apparatus according to clause 35, wherein the application comprises a video game and wherein the at least one instruction is rendering instruction for a game screen of the video game.

37. The apparatus according to clause 32, wherein the memory further comprise a 20 parameter combination index table, wherein the determining is first determining, and wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the first determining is negative:

consulting the parameter combination index table to second determine 25 whether a parameter combination index has already been assigned to the combination of parameters;

when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the parameter combination index.

38. The apparatus according to clause 37, wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does 30 not contain any of the parameters.

39. The apparatus according to clause 32, wherein the determining is first determining, wherein the memory comprises a parameter index table, and wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the first determining is negative:

5 consulting the parameter index table to second determine whether a parameter index has already been assigned to each of the individual parameters in the combination of parameters;

when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the parameter index for each the parameters in the combination of parameters.

10

40. The apparatus according to clause 39, wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not contain any of the parameters.

15 41. The apparatus according to clause 40, wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the second determining is positive:

assigning a parameter combination index to the combination of parameters; and

20 storing the parameter combination index in the memory in association with the combination of parameters.

42. The apparatus according to clause 41, wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the second determining is positive:

25 formulating the packet so that it further contains the parameter combination index.

43. The apparatus according to clause 31, wherein the memory comprises a parameter index table, and wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

30 when the determining is negative:

identifying one or more parameters for which a parameter index has not been previously assigned;

for each of the one or more parameter, assigning a respective parameter index and storing the respective parameter index in the parameter index table in association with the parameter.

44. The apparatus according to clause 41, wherein to create the packet, the processing

5 unit is further configured for:

when the determining is negative:

formulating the packet so that it contains each of the one or more parameters.

45. The apparatus according to clause 44, wherein to create the packet, the processing

10 unit is further configured for:

when the determining is negative:

formulating the packet so that it further contains a parameter index associated with each of the one or more parameter.

46. The apparatus according to clause 44, wherein to create the packet, the processing

15 unit is further configured for:

when the determining is negative:

identifying one or more parameters for which a parameter index has already been assigned;

formulating the packet so that it further contains the parameter index associated with each of the one or more parameters.

20 47. The apparatus according to clause 46, wherein when the packet is formulated, it

does not contain any of said one or more parameters.

48. The apparatus according to any one of clauses 31 to 47, wherein the interface

comprises an output queue, wherein the packet is released by placing it in the output queue.

25 49. The apparatus according to clause 32, wherein the identifier of the function for execution by the remote device is encoded in at least one of the parameters.

50. The apparatus according to clause 31, connected to the remote device over a private data network.

30 51. In combination:

the apparatus of any one of clauses 31 to 46; and
a second apparatus, comprising:

an interface for obtaining an identifier of at least one second instruction for execution by the remote device;

5 a processing unit for creating a second packet representing the at least one second instruction and releasing the second packet via the interface towards the remote device;

wherein to create the second packet, the processing unit is configured for:
consulting the shared packet dictionary to second determine whether
a packet index has already been assigned to the at least one second instruction;

10 when the second determining is positive, formulating the second packet so that it contains the second packet index.

52. The combination according to clause 51, wherein the first and second packet indexes are identical when the first and second instructions are identical.

53. The combination according to clause 51, wherein the first instruction comprises an
15 identifier of a first function and a first combination of parameters for use in execution
of the first function and wherein the second instruction comprises an identifier of a
second function and a second combination of parameters for use in execution of the
second function.

54. The combination according to clause 53, wherein to create the first packet, the
20 processing entity of the first apparatus is further configured for:

when the first determining is positive, formulating the second packet so that it
does not contain the identifier of the second function or any of the
parameters in the second combination of parameters.

55. The combination according to clause 54, wherein to create the second packet, the
25 processing entity of the second apparatus is further configured for:

when the second determining is positive, formulating the second packet so that
it does not contain the identifier of the second function or any of the
parameters in the second combination of parameters.

56. The combination according to any one of clauses 51 to 55, wherein the first and
30 second apparatuses devices are embodied in a cloud gaming server.

57. The combination according to clause 56, wherein the shared packet dictionary is
part of the cloud gaming server.

58. The combination according to clause 51, wherein the shared packet dictionary is accessible to the first and second apparatuses over a storage area network.
59. The combination according to any one of clauses 51-58, wherein the first apparatus is connected to the second apparatus over a computer network.
- 5 60. The combination according to any one of clauses 51-58, wherein the first apparatus is connected to the second apparatus in a data center.
61. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions for execution by at least one processor of a local device, wherein execution of the instructions by the at least one processor of the local device causes the local device to implement a method that comprises:
 - 10 obtaining an identifier of at least one command for execution by the remote device;
 - creating a packet representing the at least one command; and
 - releasing the packet towards the remote device;
- 15 wherein creating the packet comprises:
 - consulting a memory to determine whether a packet index has already been assigned to the at least one command;
 - when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the packet index.
- 20 62. A method for execution by a local device connectable to a remote device, the method comprising:
 - obtaining a sequence of instructions for execution by the remote device;
 - creating a packet representing the sequence of instructions; and
 - releasing the packet towards the remote device;
- 25 wherein creating the packet comprises:
 - consulting a memory to determine whether a sequence index has already been assigned to the sequence of instructions;
 - when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the sequence index.
- 30 63. The method according to clause 62, wherein creating the packet further comprises:
 - when the determining is negative:
 - creating a packet for each instruction in the sequence of instructions; and

releasing each packet towards the remote device.

64. An apparatus connectable to a remote device, the apparatus comprising:

an interface for obtaining a sequence of instructions for execution by the remote device;

5 a processing unit for creating a packet representing the sequence of instructions and for releasing the packet via the interface towards the remote device; a memory comprising a sequence dictionary; wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is configured for:

10 consulting the sequence dictionary to determine whether a sequence index has already been assigned to the sequence of instructions; when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the packet index.

65. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions for execution by at least one processor of a local device, wherein execution of the instructions by the at 15 least one processor of the local device causes the local device to implement a method that comprises:

obtaining a sequence of commands for execution by the remote device; creating a packet representing the sequence of commands; and releasing the packet towards the remote device;

20 wherein creating the packet comprises:

consulting a memory to determine whether a sequence index has already been assigned to the sequence of commands; when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the sequence index.

25 66. A method for execution by a second device connectable to a first device, comprising:

obtaining from the first device a packet comprising a packet index associated with a remote function call placed by the first device;

30 consulting a packet dictionary based on the packet index to identify a function associated with the remote function call and to determine a combination of parameters associated with the remote function call;

carrying out the function using the parameters in the combination of parameters.

67. The method according to clause 66, wherein to determine the combination of parameters associated with the remote function call, the method comprises determining from the packet dictionary, based on the packet index, a combination of parameter indexes associated with the combination of parameters and consulting a parameter index table on a basis of the parameter indexes in the combination of parameter indexes to determine the parameters in the combination of parameters.

5 68. The method according to clause 66, wherein to identify the function associated with the remote function call, the method comprises determining from the packet dictionary, based on the packet index, at least one function index and consulting a function table on a basis of the function index to identify the function associated with the remote function call.

10 69. The method according to clause 68, further comprising, during one or more preceding steps:

15 obtaining from the first device a packet comprising an identity of the function associated with the remote function call;

 storing the identity of the function in the function table in association with the function index.

70. The method according to clause 69, further comprising, during the one or more preceding steps:

20 obtaining from the first device at least one packet comprising the parameters associated with the remote function call;

 storing the parameters in the parameter index table in association with respective ones of the parameter indexes.

71. The method according to clause 70, further comprising, during the one or more preceding steps:

25 obtaining from the first device a packet comprising the function index and a combination of parameter indexes associated with the combination of parameters;

 storing the function index and the combination of parameter indexes in the packet dictionary in association with the packet index.

30 72. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions for execution by at least one processor of a server, wherein execution of the instructions by the at least

one processor of the server causes the server to implement a method that comprises:

obtaining from a computing apparatus connected to the server a packet comprising a packet index associated with a remote function call placed by the first device;

5

consulting a packet dictionary based on the packet index to identify a function associated with the remote function call and to determine a combination of parameters associated with the remote function call;

carrying out the function using the parameters in the combination of parameters.

10 73. A method for execution by a second device connectable to a first device, comprising:

obtaining from the first device a packet comprising at least a plurality of parameter indexes associated with a remote function call placed by the first device;

15 consulting a parameter index table on a basis of the plurality of parameter indexes to determine a plurality of parameters in a combination of parameters associated with the remote function call;

identifying a function associated with the remote function call; and

20 carrying out the function for the first device at the second device using the parameters in the combination of parameters.

74. The method according to clause 73, wherein the packet comprises a function index, and wherein identifying a function associated with the remote function call comprises consulting a function table on a basis of the function index.

75. The method according to clause 73, further comprising:

25 storing a packet index in the packet dictionary in association with the function index and the combination of parameter indexes.

76. The method according to clause 75, further comprising:

assigning the packet index to the function index and the combination of parameter indexes, wherein assigning is carried out in accordance with a 30 process that is known to the first device.

77. A method for execution by a second device connectable to a first device, comprising:

obtaining from the first device a packet comprising a sequence index associated with a sequence of instructions issued by the first device;
5 consulting a sequence dictionary based on the sequence index to identify a plurality of functions respectively associated with the sequence of remote procedure calls and to determine, for each function, a respective combination of parameters;
carrying out the plurality of functions using the parameters in the respective combination of parameters.

78. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions for execution by at 10 least one processor of a local device in an on-line gaming system, wherein execution of the instructions by the at least one processor of the local device causes implementation of:

15 a game state management process for managing game state for a plurality of participants in a game;
a plurality of local stubs for obtaining commands issued by the game state management process, wherein upon obtaining a given one of the commands, a given one of the local stubs is configured to consult a packet dictionary shared among the plurality of local stubs in an attempt to find a packet identifier associated with the given instruction, and wherein upon a 20 packet identifier being found, the given one of the local stubs is configured to release a packet containing the packet identifier towards a remote stub for remote execution of the given instruction at a device remote from the local device.

79. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to clause 78, wherein the 25 local device is a central server and wherein the remote device is a rendering server equipped with a GPU.

80. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to clause 78 or clause 79, wherein the at least one processor comprises a plurality of processors that implement the game state management process collaboratively.

30 81. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to any one of clauses 78 to 80, wherein the local stubs are associated with respective participants in the game.

82. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to any one of clauses 78 to 81, wherein the commands comprise rendering instructions.

83. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to any one of clauses 78 to 82, wherein the given one of the local stubs is configured to receive a rendered game scene in response to having released the packet towards the remote device.

5 84. A computing apparatus, comprising:

- an interface for connection to a remote device;
- at least one processor for executing a game state management process to manage game state for a plurality of participants in a game;
- 10 a memory storing a packet dictionary;
- the at least one processor implementing a plurality of local stubs for obtaining instructions issued by the game state management process, wherein upon obtaining a given set of instructions, a given one of the local stubs is configured to consult the packet dictionary shared among the plurality of local stubs in an attempt to find a packet identifier associated with the given set of instructions, and wherein upon a packet identifier being found, the given one of the local stubs is configured to release a packet containing the packet identifier towards the remote device via the interface for remote execution of the given set of instructions.

15 20 85. The computing apparatus according to clause 84, implemented in a central server, wherein the remote device comprises at least one rendering server equipped with a GPU.

25 86. The computing apparatus according to clause 84 or clause 85, wherein the at least one processor comprises a plurality of processors that implement the game state management process collaboratively.

87. The computing apparatus according to any one of clauses 84 to 86, wherein the local stubs are associated with respective participants in the game.

88. The computing apparatus according to any one of clauses 84 to 87, wherein the commands are rendering instructions.

30 89. The computing apparatus according to clause any one of clauses 84 to 88, the given one of the local stubs being configured to receive a rendered game scene in response to having released the packet towards the remote device.

90. A server system, comprising:

- a game state server implementing a game state management process for at least one participant of a video game, the game state server adjusting a state of the video game based on input received over a network from at least one device associated with the at least one participant; and
- a rendering server for rendering game screens for the at least one participant and for causing transmission of the game screens to the at least one participant over the network, the rendering server carrying out said rendering based on rendering commands that are compressed by the game state server, transmitted to the rendering server and decompressed by the rendering server.

91. The server system according to clause 90, further comprising a second network over which the compressed rendering commands are transmitted from the game state server to the rendering server.

92. The server system according to clause 91, wherein the second network comprises a low-latency private data network.

93. The server system according to any one of clauses 90 to 92, wherein to compress the rendering commands, the game state server is configured for obtaining a set of rendering commands, consulting a packet dictionary in an attempt to determine whether a packet representing the set of rendering instructions has previously been transmitted to the rendering server and, when the attempt is successful, transmitting an index of the packet to the rendering server.

These and other aspects and features of the present invention will now become apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art upon review of the following description of specific embodiments of the invention in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the accompanying drawings:

Fig. 1 is a block diagram of a system including a central server and a rendering server, according to a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a block diagram showing various functional modules of the central server, according to a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 3 is a block diagram showing various functional modules of the rendering server, according to a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 4 is a flowchart illustrating steps in a game state management process executed by the central server;

5 Fig. 5A illustrates a data structure for playing character input information that may be received from a client device;

Fig. 5B illustrates a data structure for a rendering instruction that may be issued by a game state management process being executed on the central server;

Fig. 6 conceptually illustrates a remote procedure call and the functional entities

10 involved therein, according to a non-limiting example embodiment;

Fig. 7A is a flowchart representative of steps in a marshalling process, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 7B shows various mappings used in the marshalling process, including a function index table, a parameter index table and a packet dictionary, in accordance with a non-

15 limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 7C shows a parameter combination index table that may be used in some non-limiting embodiments of the present invention;

Fig. 7D is a variant of Fig. 7A in accordance with another non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

20 Fig. 8A conceptually illustrates the state of the function index table, the parameter index table and the packet dictionary, prior to processing a first of three example instructions, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 8B conceptually illustrates the state of the function index table, the parameter index table and the packet dictionary, after processing the first instruction, as well as

25 the resulting packet, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 8C conceptually illustrates the state of the function index table, the parameter index table and the packet dictionary, after processing the second of three example instructions, as well as the resulting packet, in accordance with a non-limiting

30 embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 8D conceptually illustrates the packet resulting from processing the third of three example instructions, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

5 Fig. 9A is a flowchart representative of steps in an unmarshalling process, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 9B shows various mappings used in the unmarshalling process, including a function index table, a parameter index table and a packet dictionary, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

10 Fig. 9C shows a parameter combination index table that may be used in some non-limiting embodiments of the present invention;

Fig. 9D is a variant of Fig. 9A in accordance with another non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

15 Fig. 10A conceptually illustrates the state of the function index table, the parameter index table and the packet dictionary, prior to processing a first received packet, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 10B conceptually illustrates the state of the function index table, the parameter index table and the packet dictionary, after processing the first received packet, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

20 Fig. 10C conceptually illustrates the state of the function index table, the parameter index table and the packet dictionary, after processing the second received packet, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 11A is a flowchart representative of steps in a marshalling process for handling sequences of instructions, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

25 Fig. 11B shows a sequence dictionary for use in the marshalling process of Fig. 11A, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 12A conceptually illustrates the state of the function index table, the parameter index table, the packet dictionary and the sequence dictionary, prior to processing a first of three example sequences of three instructions per sequence, in accordance with

30 a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 12B conceptually illustrates the state of the function index table, the parameter index table, the packet dictionary and the sequence dictionary, after processing the first

example sequence of three instructions, as well as the resulting packet, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 12C conceptually illustrates the state of the function index table, the parameter index table, the packet dictionary and the sequence dictionary, after processing the 5 second example sequence of three instructions, as well as the resulting packet, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 13 conceptually illustrates the packet resulting from processing the third of three example sequences of instructions, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention.

10 Fig. 14A is a block diagram conceptually illustrating an architecture by virtue of which a plurality of local stubs implemented on a common device maintain sets of mappings for themselves independently;

Fig. 14B is a block diagram conceptually illustrating an architecture by virtue of which a plurality of local stubs implemented on a common device share a common set of 15 mappings; and

Fig. 15 is a block diagram conceptually illustrating an architecture by virtue of which a plurality of local stubs implemented on multiple devices share a common set of mappings.

It is to be expressly understood that the description and drawings are only for the 20 purpose of illustration of certain embodiments of the invention and are an aid for understanding. They are not intended to be a definition of the limits of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

a. CLOUD-BASED ARCHITECTURE

Fig. 1 shows a cloud computing architecture 10 according to an embodiment of the 25 present invention. The cloud computing architecture 10 includes a server system for providing a service to one or more client devices 300a to 300e. In the following description, the expression "the client device 300" (or "the client devices 300") refers to any or all of the client devices 300a to 300e unless otherwise specified. In a non-limiting embodiment, the cloud computing architecture 10 is a video game architecture 30 and the "service" provided by the server system can be a single-player or a multi-player video game. It should be understood that a video game includes games that are

played purely for entertainment as well as games played with the possibility of monetary gain (gambling).

In some embodiments, one or more of the client devices 300 can be, for example, a PC, home game machine (console such as XBOXTM, PS3TM, WiiTM), or portable game

5 machine. In other embodiments, one or more of the client devices 300 may be a communication or computing device such as a cell phone, PDA, or tablet (e.g., iPadTM).

The client devices 300 have input devices, such as a touch screen, keyboard, game controller, joystick, etc., to allow users of the client devices 300 to provide input and participate in the game. In other embodiments, the user of a given one of the client

10 devices 300 may produce body motion or wave an external object; these movements are detected by a camera or other sensor (e.g., KinectTM), while software operating within the client device attempts to correctly guess whether the user intended to provide input to the client device and, if so, the nature of such input.

In a non-limiting embodiment, the server system comprises a central server 200 and a

15 rendering server 100, although in other non-limiting embodiments, the server system can comprise one or more clusters of one or more servers per cluster. The servers in the server system, such as the central server 200 and the rendering server 100, may communicate through a network 450 such as, for example, a dedicated private network, data center, or a virtual private network (VPN). The network 450 may ideally provide input to the client device and, if so, the nature of such input.

20 The central server 200 (which may also be referred to as a game state server) receives input signals 20 from the client devices 300a to 300e. The input signals 20 can be received from the various client devices 300a to 300e through a back channel over a network 400, such as a public data network (e.g., the Internet) or a private IP network.

25 The input signals 20 can be the result of the client devices 300a to 300e detecting user actions, or they can be generated autonomously by the client devices 300a to 300e themselves. The input signal 20 from a given client device can convey that the user of the client device wishes to cause the character under his control to move, jump, kick, turn, swing, pull, grab, etc.. Alternatively or in addition, the input signal 20 from a given

30 client device can convey that the user of the client device wishes to select a particular camera view (e.g., first-person or third-person).

The rendering server 100 is configured for rendering game screens for the client devices 300a to 300e, based on commands/instructions received from the central server 200. These commands can be transmitted from the central server 200 to the rendering server 100 in the form of packets 40 over the network 450. Output signals 5 30 containing the rendered game screens are distributed by the rendering server 100 to the client devices 300 over the network 400, such as the Internet. In some embodiments, it may be possible to establish a low-latency, high-bandwidth channel between the central server 200 and the rendering server 100 over the network 400, in which case the networks 450, 400 could utilize the same physical resources. In other 10 embodiments, the networks 450, 400 are separate networks and traverse separate physical paths.

Different game screens are produced for different client devices 300 depending on their location in the game, camera angle and other game parameters. Of interest is the fact 15 that a client device 300 need not have any rendering functionality for displaying a game screen. That is, each of the client devices 300 need only be an apparatus including a user interface for detecting input and comprising (or connectable to) a display device for displaying a received and rendered game screen. Since generating a game screen uses more hardware resources than those to be used by a process of decoding a video stream, the present system enables users to participate in a game independent of the 20 rendering performance of a client device 300 by transmitting already-rendered game screens from the rendering server 100 to the client device 300.

b. CENTRAL SERVER

Various functional modules that make up the central server 200 of this embodiment will 25 now be explained with reference to Fig. 2. A central CPU 201 controls the operation of each module of the central server 200. More specifically, the CPU 201 reads out program instructions from, for example, a ROM 202 or central storage medium 204. The CPU 201 expands the program instructions into a central RAM 203 and executes the program, thereby carrying out a “game state management process” and controlling the operation of various other modules in the central server 200.

30 The central ROM 202 can be, for example, a programmable non-volatile memory. The central ROM 202 stores program instructions for the game state management process,

and may also store other program instructions. The central ROM 202 also stores information such as data required for the operation of each module of the central server 200.

5 The central RAM 203 can be a volatile memory. The central RAM 203 is used not only as an expansion area for the game state management process operation program, but also as a storage area for temporarily storing, for example, intermediate data output during the operation of other modules of the central server 200.

10 The central storage medium 204 can be, for example, a mass storage device such as an HDD detachable from the central server 200. In this embodiment, the central storage medium 204 is used as, for example, a database for managing participants involved the game, and a database for managing various kinds of information on the game, which are required to generate a game screen to be provided for each participant in the game.

15 The central communication unit 205 is a communication interface of the central server 200. The central communication unit 205 receives input signals 20 from the client devices 300 over the network 400. The central communication unit 205 also sends packets 40 to the rendering server 100 over the network 450. When necessary or appropriate, the central communication unit 205 may convert data into a data format complying with various communication specifications.

20 It should be appreciated that as used herein, the term "participant" refers to both "players" and "spectators", wherein "players" are typically assigned a character over which they exert some control during game play and "spectators" can typically view players' movements from a location of their choice without having control over game play.

25 c. RENDERING SERVER

Fig. 3 is a block diagram showing various functional modules of the rendering server 100 according to a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention. A CPU 101 controls the operation of various modules of the rendering server 100. More specifically, the CPU 101 reads out program instructions stored in a ROM 102 or 30 storage medium 104, expands the program instructions on a RAM 103, and executes

the program, thereby carrying out a “rendering control process” and controlling the operation of each module.

The ROM 102 is, for example, a programmable nonvolatile memory. The ROM 102 stores the program instructions for the rendering control process, other program instructions, and information such as data required for the operation of each module of the rendering server 100.

The RAM 103 can be a volatile memory. The RAM 103 is used not only as an operation program expansion area, but also as a storage area for temporarily storing, for example, intermediate data output during the operation of each module of the rendering server 100. The storage medium 104 can be, for example, a mass storage device such as an HDD detachable from the rendering server 100.

A communication unit 113 is a communication interface of the rendering server 100. The communication unit 113 exchanges data with other apparatuses. For example, the communication unit 113 receives packets 40 from the central server 200 over the network 450. The communication unit 113 converts data received across the network 450 into an arbitrary data format readable by the rendering server 100, and temporarily stores the data in, for example, the RAM 103. In addition, the communication unit 113 sends rendered game screens to the client devices 300 over the network 400. When transmitting data to a transmission destination apparatus (such as one of the client devices 300), the communication unit 113 converts the data into a data transmission format compatible with the network 400 or a transmission destination apparatus, and transmits the data to the transmission destination apparatus.

d. GRAPHICS PROCESSING UNITS

Game screens to be provided for the client devices 300 are generated by one or more graphics processing units (GPUs) 105 within or accessible to the rendering server 100. Each GPU 105 is connected to a video memory 109 (e.g., VRAM), which provides a rendering area for the game screen. When performing rendering on the connected VRAM 109, each GPU 105 expands an object in a cache memory (not shown), and writes the mapped object in the corresponding VRAM 109. Note that one video memory 109 is connected to one GPU 105 in this embodiment, but the present

invention is not limited to this. That is, the number of video memories 109 connected to the GPU 105 can be any arbitrary number.

It is to be noted that, depending on processing power (which can be related to the number of GPUs it operates), the rendering server 100 may be capable of 5 simultaneously generating a plurality of game screens for a plurality of participants.

The GPUs 105 are controlled by providing them with rendering instructions (also referred to as "rendering commands"). Interaction with the GPUs 105 can be achieved through a low-level API in order to draw triangles, lines, or points per frame, or to start highly parallel operations on the GPUs 105. The low-level API hides different GPU 10 implementations behind a coherent abstraction. One non-limiting example of a low-level API is Direct3DTM, available from Microsoft Corporation of Redmond, Washington. Generally speaking, supplying a rendering command to a GPU amounts to calling a function to be executed by the GPU.

Examples of detailed data that may be part of a rendering command used to render a 15 particular object may include one or more of: model data; texture data; the identity of a rendering program (for example, a shader) to be used; and data for calculations (for example, the light source intensity, light source vector, and rotation matrix) to be used by the rendering program. Of course, a rendering command may contain other information used in the process of rendering an object.

20 The rendering of a game screen for a particular participant may require the execution of hundreds or thousands of rendering instructions. Once a game screen has been rendered for a particular participant, the game screen is provided by the rendering server 100 to the client device 300 associated with the particular participant. Thus, the system 10 of the present embodiment can generate game screens corresponding to 25 inputs provided at the various client devices 300 at a rate of several times (e.g., 30 or 60) per second for each participant. These game screens are displayed to the corresponding participants via the display device of each participant's client device 300. At this rate, the human eye will perceive fluidity of motion.

Although the system 10 of the present non-limiting embodiment includes one rendering 30 server 100 and one central server 200, the present invention is not limited to this specific arrangement. For example, it is possible to allocate one rendering server 100 to a plurality of central servers 200, or to allocate a plurality of rendering servers 100 to

a plurality of central servers 200. The central server 200 can also designate a rendering server 100 or a GPU of a rendering server 100 to be used to execute a rendering instruction, in accordance with information indicating the number of game screens simultaneously generated by a rendering server 100 or each GPU of a rendering server 100.

5 e. GAME STATE MANAGEMENT PROCESS

A non-limiting example of execution of the game state management process by the central server 200 will be explained below with reference to the flowchart shown in Fig. 4. The game state management process for a given participant is spawned when that 10 participant's client device 300 connects to the central server 200. The game state management process for the given participant includes a main loop that is executed for each frame, namely several (e.g., 30 or 60) times per second. As part of the main loop, the central server 200 receives participant input 30 via the client devices 300 (step S401), modifies game state information (step S403), determines the objects in 15 the "game screen" for the given participant (S404) and generates function calls to the GPUs 105 (step S405). This is now described in greater detail.

In executing the game state management process, the central server 200 manages 20 information pertaining to characters operated by the players (such as their position and direction on a map) and also manages events associated with each character and with the game as a whole. For example, when a given player provides an input to his or her client device 300, this information is transmitted across the network 400 to the central server 200 which, in executing the game state management process, updates the information pertaining to the given player's character. Also as part of the game state management process, the central server 200 causes the rendering server 100 to 25 generate a game screen for each participant. Specifically, the central server 200 determines one or more objects to be rendered on the game screen for each participant, and transmits a set of rendering instructions (possibly thousands per frame) to the rendering server 100.

Turning now to step S401, input information may be received from the client device 300 30 associated with the given participant or from the client device 300 associated with one or more other players or spectators. The input information may indicate that the

players or spectators have carried out an operation on their characters via their client device. The input information may have a data structure, a non-limiting example of which is shown in Fig. 5A. For instance, the data structure may contain one or more of: an identifier (for example, an IP address and user identification information) of a 5 client device at which an operation by a player or spectator has been carried out; movement information, including magnitude and direction; identification information of a selected action; rendering range of a game screen (for example, a camera parameter); and/or the display setting (for example, the screen display resolution and the number of colors) of the display device connected to the client device. It is to be noted that the 10 data structure of the input information received by the central server 200 is not limited to the foregoing.

In one non-limiting embodiment, the input information can be a set of numerical values obtained by converting an operation effected on the client device 300 by the player or spectator into numerical values/parameters. In other embodiments, the input 15 information may include an input signal detected by the client device 300 (e.g., in response to pressing a button or the like by the player or spectator), in which case the process of conversion into numerical values/parameters can be performed by the central CPU 201, as a function of the type of client device 300 from which it was received.

20 At step S403, an update to the playing characters, non-playing characters and other graphical elements is performed. Examples of other graphical elements include background objects such as a landform. The objects to be rendered can change with time in accordance with game rules, or by the action of a character as controlled by the corresponding player.

25 In summary, therefore, the central CPU 201 reads out, from the central storage medium 204, state information corresponding to each character or graphical element in the game that was affected by the input information, clock information or other information. In the case of character state information, this may include information pertaining to the appearance and properties of a character that can be changed by a 30 player's operation, such as, for example, the position (coordinate information) of the character on the map, the gazing direction of the character, and the character's action. Based on the input information, a parameter pertaining to the character is updated.

Accordingly, the actions carried out by the players can be reflected on the characters in the game.

At step S404, objects in the “game screen rendering range” for the given participant are determined. The game screen rendering range can include a set of coordinates (e.g., 5 in two or in three dimensions) that delimits the set of objects contained in the game screen for that participant. The objects contained in the game screen for a given participant will vary from one participant to the next.

More specifically, the central CPU 201 reads out, from the central storage medium 204, the game screen rendering range for the given participant's client device 300. The 10 game screen rendering range contains, e.g., camera parameters corresponding to the game screen. The central CPU 201 refers to the camera parameters, and specifies, as a rendering object contained in the game screen, a rendering object such as a character whose state information contains coordinate information included in the camera's rendering range. Note that an identifier is assigned to each object to be 15 rendered, and the central CPU 201 associates the object identifier with the client device identifier, and records the information on the central storage medium 204.

At step S405, the game state management process generates rendering instructions for rendering the objects in the given participant's game screen. As shown by the data structure in Fig. 5B, the rendering instructions issued by the game state management 20 process for a particular client device 300 may include one or more of: an identifier of each object contained in the game screen; detailed information regarding each object contained in the game screen; state information regarding each object contained in the game screen; and information regarding the rendering range and display setting of the game screen.

25 It is to be noted that if the game is, for example, a game in which the camera position remains unchanged or a game having a fixed display resolution, information such as the camera parameters and display setting indicating the game screen rendering range need not be contained in the rendering instruction.

f. REMOTE PROCEDURE CALLS

30 It will be noted that the rendering instructions generated at step S405 of the game state management process executed by the CPU 201 of the central server 200 are issued as

function calls destined for one or more of the GPUs 105, which are on the rendering server 100. This can be achieved by virtue of remote procedure calls, whereby a local device (the central server 200) calls one or more functions at a remote device (the rendering server 100). Such remote procedure calls are carried out several hundred or 5 thousand times per frame, for each of the client devices 300.

Fig. 6 conceptually illustrates a remote procedure call and the functional entities involved therein, according to a non-limiting example embodiment. With reference to Fig. 6, there is provided a local stub 620, which can be embodied as a software routine / procedure that is invoked either implicitly or explicitly by the game state management 10 process upon issuing one or more rendering instructions 610. For example, whereas the game state management process may operate at a first level of the OSI model (e.g., the application layer), the local stub 620 may operate at a lower level of the OSI model (e.g., the presentation layer). When the one or more rendering instructions 610 is issued at step S405 and its associated data is pushed onto the stack, this is 15 recognized by the local stub 620. Alternatively, the local stub 620 can be invoked by operating system.

The local stub 620 assembles the data associated with the one or more rendering instructions 610 into a packet 630 and makes a low-level system call to send the packet 630. Assembling the data associated with the rendering instructions into the 20 packet 630 is called “marshalling”, and will be described in further detail later on. The operating system of the central server 200 releases the packet 630 from the central server 200 (which can be viewed as the “local” device) into the network 450 towards the rendering server 100 (which can be viewed as the “remote: device”).

At the rendering server 100, the operating system of the rendering server 100 passes 25 the incoming packet 640 (whose contents may be identical to those of packet 630) to a remote stub 650, which is part of the rendering control process running on the CPU 101. The remote stub 650 disassembles the parameters from the packet 640. Disassembly of the parameters is called “unmarshalling”, and will be described in further detail later on. This results in the one or more rendering instructions 630 being 30 reconstructed. Finally, the remote stub 650 sends the rendering instructions to the GPUs 105 on the rendering server 100. To this end, the remote stub 650 locally makes the various API calls corresponding to the rendering instructions.

When a complete game screen for the given participant has been rendered on the rendering server 100, the rendering control process sends the rendered game screen to the client device 300 corresponding to that participant. The game screen may comprise a frame of video, which can be encoded into a suitable format for delivery to 5 the client device 300 over the network 400. The video frame may also include audio as well as other information including control information.

In some cases, it may be the case that within a series of rendering instructions issued by the game state management process for a given participant, some of these rendering instructions will be similar or identical. The same may be true of other 10 instructions that trigger remote procedure calls. In accordance with some non-limiting embodiments of the present invention, the remote procedure calls can be made more efficient by compressing or condensing them. Specifically, the local stub 620 can be specially adapted to carry out a marshalling process that leads to the generation of condensed packets 40. At the rendering server side, the remote stub 650 can be 15 specially adapted to carry out a unmarshalling process for expanding received packets that have been condensed.

g. MARSHALLING

In a non-limiting embodiment, the local stub 620 in the central server 200 executes a marshalling process. Generally speaking, as part of the marshalling process, an 20 instruction to be executed by the remote device is obtained. Following this, a packet representing the instruction is created and released towards the remote device. Creation of the packet involves consulting a memory to determine whether a "packet index" has already been assigned to the instruction. If this is the case, the packet is formulated so that it contains the packet index. Since fewer bits are needed to encode 25 the packet index than to encode the instruction, the packets generated by the marshalling process will have a tendency to be condensed when they repeatedly represent the same instruction.

Reference is made to Fig. 7A, which shows a flowchart representative of steps in a marshalling process for generating condensed packets to be sent to a remote device, 30 in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention. At step S710, an instruction is received. In a non-limiting example, the instruction may be a rendering

instruction issued by a game state management process at the application layer. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the instruction can be formatted in numerous ways. For example, the instruction may be formatted as a function call, such as:

Functioncall(Param1, Param2, Param3, Data).

5 It will be seen that the instruction includes at least a “function identifier” (Functioncall) and a combination of “parameters” (Param1, Param2, Param3). The function identifier represents a function to be executed remotely by the remote device (e.g., the rendering server 100). The function identifier (Functioncall) is considered to be condensable, which means that the marshalling process will favor using a
10 function index, rather than the function identifier, to encode the function to be executed by the remote device. This will result in fewer bits being used to encode the same function.

The combination of parameters (Param1, Param2, Param3) represent function arguments that are also considered to be condensable. This means that the
15 marshalling process will favor using a parameter indexes, rather than the parameters themselves, to represent the function arguments. Examples of function arguments that are condensable include the names of pointers, addresses and variables.

Optionally, the instruction can also include function arguments (e.g., Data) that are not considered to be condensable. The demarcation between function arguments that are
20 considered to be condensable those which are not considered to be condensable may be different in different embodiments. For example, in some embodiments, the values acquired by pointers, addresses and variables are considered to be condensable, whereas in other embodiments, these same values would not be considered incondensable.

25 Referring now to Fig. 7B, there is shown a function index table 790 and a parameter index table 792. The function index table 790 associates function identifiers with respective function indexes, and is accessed on the basis of a received function identifier. Similarly, the parameter index table 792 associates parameters with respective parameter indexes, and is accessed on the basis of a received parameter.
30 In addition, there is shown a packet dictionary 794. The packet dictionary 794 associates specific function calls involving specific combinations of parameters to respective packet indexes. That is to say, each entry in the packet dictionary 794

associates a function identifier and a combination of parameters to a particular packet index. There may be a maximum number of parameters N in a combination of parameters that may be listed in the packet dictionary 794.

In one non-limiting embodiment, the function index table 790, the parameter index table 5 792 and the packet dictionary 794 may be implemented as databases that are maintained in the central RAM 203 or the central storage medium 204. In another non-limiting embodiment, the function index table 790, the parameter index table 792 and the packet dictionary 794 can be maintained on external storage, which is accessible to the central server 200 via a local storage area network (SAN), the network 450 or the 10 network 400. Still other possibilities will be apparent to those of skill in the art.

At step S720, the packet dictionary 794 is checked. In particular, the current set of function identifier and combination (i.e., ordered set) of parameters is compared against the entries of the packet dictionary 794 to determine whether the packet dictionary 794 includes a packet index for the current set of function identifier and 15 combination of parameters. If the answer is affirmative, this will indicate that a packet representing the same function and the same combination has already been created and transmitted to the remote device (e.g., the rendering serve 100). In that case, the marshalling process proceeds to step S740, wherein the existing packet index is retrieved from the packet dictionary 794, and a packet is formulated such that it 20 includes the packet index. In addition, function arguments (e.g., certain forms of data) that are not considered to be condensable may be appended to the packet.

The marshalling process then proceeds to step S750, wherein the newly created packet is transmitted to the remote device (e.g., the rendering server 100) over the network 450. The packet also includes any necessary header or other information that 25 would make it suitable for transmission over the network 450. For example, the packet may be formatted in such a way as to alert the remote device that it carries a packet index rather than the function identifier or the parameters themselves.

However, if at step S720 it had been determined that the packet dictionary 794 does not include a packet index for the current set of function identifier and combination of 30 parameters, the marshalling process proceeds to step S760. At step S760, the function index table 790 and the parameter index table 792 are checked. In particular, it is determined whether the function index table 790 includes a function index for the

function identifier. If the answer is affirmative, this will indicate that the same function has been called in the past, although with different parameters (or with the same parameters but in a different order). It is also determined whether the parameter index table 792 includes a parameter index for one or more of the parameters. If the answer 5 is affirmative for a given parameter, this will indicate that the given parameter has been part of a function call in the past. Accordingly, at step S765, the previously assigned/allocated function index and/or parameter index(es) is(are) retrieved.

The marshalling process then proceeds to step S770, where a packet is formulated such that it includes any previously assigned function index and/or parameter index(es) 10 that was(were) retrieved at step S765. In addition, function arguments that are not considered to be condensable may be appended to the packet.

If there was no function index retrieved at step S765, then the complete function identifier is used in the packet. In addition, a step S775, an entry for the function identifier is created in the function index table 790 and a function index is assigned to 15 the function identifier and stored in association therewith. Assignment of the function index to the function identifier may proceed in accordance with a function index assignment algorithm that is known to both the local device and the remote device. If this is the case, then it is not necessary to inform the remote device of the function index assigned to the function identifier, because the remote device can derive the 20 function index by executing the same function index assignment algorithm as the local device. However, if the function index assignment algorithm is not known to both the local device and the remote device, then it may be desirable to include, in the packet, not only the complete function identifier, but also the function index associated therewith.

25 Similarly, if, for at least one of the parameters, there was no parameter index retrieved at step S765, then the complete parameter is used in the packet. In addition, at step S780, an entry for each such parameter is created in the parameter index table 792 and a parameter index is assigned to the parameter and stored in association therewith. Assignment of parameter indexes to parameters may proceed in 30 accordance with a parameter index assignment algorithm that is known to both the local device and the remote device. If this is the case, then it is not necessary to inform the remote device of the parameter index assigned to a given parameter, because the

remote device can derive the parameter index by executing the same parameter index assignment algorithm as the local device. However, if the parameter index assignment algorithm is not known to the remote device, then when including a complete parameter in the packet, it may also be desirable to include the parameter index 5 associated therewith.

The marshalling process further executes step S750, wherein the packet is transmitted to the remote device (e.g., the rendering server 100) over the network 450. This can be done by placing the packet in an output queue of the central communication unit 205. The packet also includes any necessary header or other information that would 10 make the packet suitable for transmission over the network 450.

It should be understood that the creation of entries in the function index table 790 and the parameter index table 792 (i.e., the execution of steps S775 and S780) can occur prior to, during or after execution of step S750.

h. MARSHALLING (EXAMPLE)

15 An example description will now be provided in order to illustrate operation of the marshalling process in the creation of three packets from the following three successive instructions:

```
Functioncall_1(Param1, Param2, Param3);  
Functioncall_2(Param3, Param4);  
Functioncall_1(Param1, Param2, Param3).
```

20 It will be noted that the first and third instructions utilize the same function identifier Functioncall_1 and the same function arguments Param1, Param2 and Param3. It is assumed that all function arguments are condensable, and therefore qualify as “parameters”. However, this assumption is made merely for the sake of simplicity and 25 it need not be the case in every embodiment.

Fig. 8A shows the status of the packet dictionary 794, the function index table 790 and the parameter index table 792 prior to receipt or processing of the first instruction Functioncall_1(Param1, Param2, Param3). Quite simply, the packet dictionary 794, the function index table 790 and the parameter index table 792 are all empty. 30 Consider now three iterations of the marshalling process, as executed on the first, second and third aforementioned instructions, respectively. The first iteration of the

marshalling process begins at step S710, whereby the first instruction Functioncall_1(Param1, Param2, Param3) is received. The function identifier is Functioncall_1 and the combination (ordered set) of parameters is Param1, Param2, Param3. The packet dictionary 794 is consulted at step S720, and it is 5 determined that there is no entry in the packet dictionary 794 for the current function identifier (Functioncall_1) and the current combination of parameters (Param1, Param2, Param3). Next, at step S760, the function index table 790 and the parameter index table 792 are checked. These are also empty, and therefore the marshalling process continues to step S770. This results in the creation of a packet which, as 10 illustrated in Fig. 8B, is denoted 810 includes function identifier Functioncall_1 and parameters Param1, Param2 and Param3, the order of which is preserved.

At step S775, which may be executed before, during or after step S770, an entry 812 is created in the function index table 790 for function identifier Functioncall_1, and a function index 0x1 is assigned to function identifier Functioncall_1 and stored in the 15 newly created entry 812. In addition, three entries 814, 816, 818 are created in the parameter index table 792, one each for Param1, Param2 and Param3, and parameter indexes 0x1, 0x2 and 0x3 are assigned to parameters Param1, Param2 and Param3 and stored in the respective newly created entries 814, 816, 818. Furthermore, at step S780, which may also be executed before, during or after step 20 S770, a new entry 820 is created in the packet dictionary 794 for the function identifier Functioncall_1 together with the combination of parameters Param1, Param2, Param3, to which a packet index 0x1 is assigned.

At step S750, packet 810 is released towards the remote device. Optionally, although not shown in the drawing, packet index 0x1 may be included in packet 810, while 25 function index 0x1 may accompany function identifier Functioncall_1 and parameter indexes 0x1, 0x2 and 0x3 may accompany parameters Param1, Param2 and Param3 in packet 810. Providing this additional information may assist the remote device in replicating its own versions of the packet dictionary 794, the function index table 790 and the parameter index table 792, particularly when the remote device is not aware of 30 the algorithm/process used by the local device to generate the packet index, the function index and the parameter indexes.

The second iteration of the marshalling process begins at step S710, whereby the second instruction `Functioncall_2(Param3, Param4)` is received. The function identifier is `Functioncall_2` and the combination (ordered set) of parameters is `Param3, Param4`. The packet dictionary 794 is consulted at step S720, and it is

5 determined that there is no entry in the packet dictionary 794 for the current function identifier and combination of parameters. Next, at step S760, the function index table 790 and the parameter index table 792 are checked. The function index table 790 does not include an entry for function identifier `Functioncall_2`. However, while the parameter index table 792 does not include an entry for parameter `Param4`, it does

10 include an entry for parameter `Param3`. Accordingly, the marshalling process proceeds to step 765, where parameter index 0x3 is retrieved in association with parameter `Param3`.

With reference to Fig. 8C, the marshalling process continues to step S770, where a packet 830 is created, and includes function identifier `Functioncall_2`, parameter index 0x3 (in lieu of parameter `Param3`) and parameter `Param4`. A flag may be inserted into packet 830 in order to differentiate between fields that convey a parameter versus fields that convey a parameter index. At step S775, which may be executed before, during or after step S770, an entry 832 is created in the function index table 790 for function identifier `Functioncall_2`, and a function index 0x2 is assigned to function identifier `Functioncall_2` and stored in the newly created entry 832. In addition, an entry 834 is created in the parameter index table 792 for `Param4`, and parameter index 0x4 is assigned thereto and stored in the newly created entry 834. Furthermore, at step S780, which may also be executed before, during or after step S770, a new entry 836 is created in the packet dictionary 794 for the function identifier `Functioncall_2`

20 together with the combination of parameters `Param3, Param4`, to which a packet index 0x2 is assigned.

At step S750, packet 830 is released towards the remote device. Optionally, although not shown in the drawing, packet index 0x2 may be included in packet 830, while function index 0x2 may accompany function identifier `Functioncall_2` and parameter index 0x4 may accompany parameter `Param4` in packet 830. This additional

information may assist the remote device in replicating its own versions of the packet dictionary 794, the function index table 790 and the parameter index table 792.

It is noted that because packet 830 includes parameter index 0x3 instead of parameter Param3, packet 830 is shorter in length than it would have been, had it included

5 parameter Param3 in fully expanded (uncondensed) form. That is to say, packet 830 is condensed, which means that it takes less time to transmit and consumes less bandwidth through the network 450. Transmission efficiency thus increases as a result of the present marshalling process.

Moreover, as the number of transmitted packets increases, so does the transmission

10 efficiency. This demonstrated by considering the third iteration of the marshalling process, which begins at step S710 upon receipt of the third instruction Functioncall_1(Param1, Param2, Param3). The function identifier is

Functioncall_1 and the combination (ordered list) of parameters is Param1, Param2, Param3. The packet dictionary 794 is consulted at step S720. By virtue of earlier

15 execution of step S780 in connection with the first iteration of the marshalling process, there will have been created an entry in the packet dictionary 794 for the current function identifier and combination of parameters. Specifically, this is entry 812, which associates packet index 0x1 with function identifier Functioncall_1 and the combination of parameters Param1, Param2, Param3.

20 Thus, the marshalling process proceeds to step S740, where packet index 0x1 is retrieved, resulting in the creation of a packet 840 (see Fig. 8D) that includes packet index 0x1. At step S750, packet 840 is released towards the remote device. A flag may be inserted into packet 840 in order to signal that what is being conveyed by packet 40 is a packet index rather than a function identifier, function index, parameter

25 or parameter index.

It is noted that because packet 840 includes packet index 0x1 instead of function identifier Functioncall_1 or any of the parameters Param1, Param2, Param3—or even any of the parameter indexes 0x1, 0x2, 0x3—packet 840 is shorter in length than it would have been, had it included the aforementioned information. That is to say,

30 packet 840 is condensed, which means that it takes less time to transmit and

consumes less bandwidth through the network 450. Transmission efficiency thus increases as a result of the present marshalling process.

Further improvements in transmission efficiency can be provided in those cases where different functions call the same combination of parameters. Whereas in the above 5 described marshalling process, some efficiency is gained by representing each parameter by its parameter index, there is still a need to transmit the parameter indexes in the correct order.

Accordingly, in a variant of the above described marshalling process, and with reference to Fig. 7C, a parameter combination index table 796 may be provided. The 10 parameter combination index table 796 associates combinations of parameters to respective parameter combination indexes. That is to say, each entry in the parameter combination index table 796 associates an ordered set of parameters to a particular code (a “parameter combination index”). In one non-limiting embodiment, the parameter combination index table 796 may be implemented as a database that is 15 maintained in the central RAM 203 or the central storage medium 204. In another non-limiting embodiment, the parameter combination index table 796 can be maintained on external storage, which is accessible to the central server 200 via a local storage area network (SAN), the network 450 or the network 400.

In order for the marshalling process to make use of the parameter combination index 20 table 796, a modification is made to step S760. Specifically, step S760 would be modified so as to check the function index table 790 and the parameter combination index table 796. In this way, not only will it be determined that the function index table 790 includes a function index for the function identifier if it has already been called in the past, but also it will be determined that the parameter combination index table 790 25 includes a parameter combination index if the current combination of parameters has been called in the past, albeit using a different function. Accordingly, at step S765, the available function index and/or parameter combination index would be retrieved. Of course, if there is no entry in the parameter combination index table 796 for the current combination of parameters, then the parameter index table 792 can still be checked as 30 previously described in order to see if any of the parameters has been part of a function call in the past.

In addition, step S775 would be modified so that if it is determined that there was no entry in the parameter combination index table 796 at step S760, a new entry for the current combination of parameters would be created in the parameter combination index table 796, and a parameter combination index would be assigned to this 5 combination of parameters and stored in association therewith. Assignment of the parameter combination index to the current combination of parameters may proceed in accordance with a parameter combination index assignment algorithm that is known to both the local device and remote devices. If this is the case, then it is not necessary to inform the remote device of the parameter combination index assigned to the current 10 combination of parameters, because the remote device can derive the parameter combination index by executing the same parameter combination index assignment algorithm in parallel. However, if the parameter combination index assignment algorithm is not known to the remote device, then it may be desirable to include, in the transmitted packet, the parameter combination index associated with the current 15 combination of parameters.

In a further variant, the instruction issued by the game state management process and received by the local stub 620 may include a generic function identifier, while the specifics of the function can be partly embedded amongst the parameters. For example, consider the following sequence of instructions:

20 Functioncall(Function1, Param1, Param2, Param3);
 Functioncall(Function2, Param4, Param5, Param6).

It will be seen that even though the function identifier is the same (i.e., Functioncall), the actual function being called is different and takes the form of a function argument. In such a case, the “combination of parameters” includes at least one parameter that 25 specifies the nature of the function being called. Stated differently, in this variant, the function identifier is considered to be no different from any other parameter.

In order to accommodate the above variant, the function index table 790 would effectively be subsumed into the parameter index table 792. Accordingly, the flowchart of Fig. 7A is reproduced in modified form in Fig. 7D, where a letter “D” next to a step 30 number denotes a modified version of that step relative to Fig. 7A. Specifically, it is seen that step S760D includes consideration of the parameter index table 792 but does

not include consideration of a “function index table”. Also, reference to a “function index” has been omitted in steps S770D and S775D.

i. UNMARSHALLING

At the remote device, an unmarshalling process is executed on packets received over the network 450. The unmarshalling process can be carried out by the remote stub 650 in the rendering server 100, although it is to be understood that the unmarshalling process can be carried out by any entity that receives packets that have been marshaled as previously described with reference to Fig. 7A.

Referring now to Fig. 9B, it is assumed that the remote device (e.g., the rendering server 100) maintains a function index table 990, a parameter index table 992 and a packet dictionary 994. When properly constructed, these entities will be similar to the function index table 790, the parameter index table 792 and the packet dictionary 794 maintained by the local device (e.g., the central server 200). However, the entries in the function index table 990, the parameter index table 992 and the packet dictionary 994 are accessed differently. For example, the function index table 990, which associates function indexes with respective function identifiers, is accessed on the basis of a received function index; the parameter index table 992, which associates parameter indexes with respective parameters, is accessed on the basis of a received parameter index; and the packet dictionary 994, which associates each of a plurality of packet indexes to a specific function identifier and combination of parameters, is accessed on the basis of a received packet index.

In one non-limiting embodiment, the function index table 990, the parameter index table 992 and the packet dictionary 994 may be implemented as databases that are maintained in the RAM 103 or the storage medium 104 of the rendering server 100. In another non-limiting embodiment, the function index table 990, the parameter index table 992 and the packet dictionary 994 can be maintained on external storage, which is accessible to the rendering server 100 via a local storage area network (SAN), the network 450 or the network 400.

Reference is now made to Fig. 9A, which shows a flowchart representing the unmarshalling process, in accordance with a non-limiting embodiment of the present invention.

At step S910, a packet is received. The packet can be received over the network 450 from the local device (e.g., the central server 200), which instantiates the local stub 620 responsible for creating the packet. At step S915, it is determined whether the received packet includes a packet index. In the present embodiment, it is assumed 5 that when the received packet includes a packet index, it does not include a corresponding function identifier or combination of parameters, and when the received packet includes the corresponding function identifier or combination of parameters, it does not include a packet index. In such an embodiment, the presence of a packet index in a received packet signals that an identical packet (i.e., representing the same 10 function and parameters) has previously been created by the local device and transmitted to the remote device.

Thus, if step S910 reveals that the received packet includes a packet index, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S920, where the packet dictionary 994 is consulted on the basis of the packet index. In this manner, a corresponding function 15 identifier and combination of parameters are obtained from the packet dictionary 994, and the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S930. At step S930, the function identified by the function identifier is called locally on the remote device, using the retrieved parameters (in the appropriate combination) as arguments. For example, a game screen can be rendered by the rendering server 100. The rendered game 20 screen can be distributed to the central server 200 (via a remote procedure call in the opposite direction) or directly to the participant for which the rendering instruction was carried out.

However, if the received packet does not include a packet index, then this signals that the received packet was not previously received, and the unmarshalling process 25 proceeds to step S940. At this stage, a series of tests can be conducted, in no particular required order. These tests may also be conducted in parallel. Firstly, it can be verified whether the received packet includes either a function index or a function identifier. In the case where the received packet includes a function index, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S942, where the function index table 990 is consulted on the basis of the function index. In this manner, a corresponding function 30 identifier is obtained from the function index table 990. In the case where the received packet includes a function identifier, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S944,

where a function index is assigned to the function identifier, and an entry is created in the function index table 990, which associates the function index and the function identifier. Assignment of the function index to the function identifier may proceed in accordance with a function index assignment algorithm that is assumed to have been used by the local device during execution of the marshalling process.

At step S950, it can be verified whether the received packet includes one or more parameter indexes. In the affirmative, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S952, where the parameter index table 992 is consulted on the basis of the parameter index or indexes. As a result, corresponding parameters (or possibly a single corresponding parameter) are retrieved from the parameter index table 992. At step 10 954, it can be verified whether the received packet includes one or more parameters, rather than parameter indexes. In the affirmative, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S956, where a parameter index is assigned to each such parameter, and an entry is created in the parameter index table 992 for each such parameter, thereby 15 associating each such parameter with its newly assigned parameter index. Assignment of parameter indexes to parameters may proceed in accordance with a parameter index assignment algorithm that is assumed to have been used by the local device during execution of the marshalling process.

At step S958, a packet index is assigned to the function identifier and combination of 20 parameters that were either included in the received packet or were retrieved from the function index table 992 and/or the parameter index table 994. Assignment of the packet index to the function identifier and combination of parameters may proceed in accordance with a packet index assignment algorithm that is assumed to have been used by the local device during execution of the marshalling process.

25 In the above embodiment, it was assumed that when the received packet (see step S910) includes a packet index, it does not include the corresponding function identifier or combination of parameters, and vice versa. In such an embodiment, the presence of a packet index in a received packet signals that the very same packet has previously been received. Thus, the packet dictionary 994 has already been populated with that 30 very same packet index. On the other hand, when a previously unrecognized set of function identifier and combination of parameters is received, then the packet dictionary 994 will be populated with a new packet index, which is assigned in accordance with a

packet index assignment algorithm (see step S956). However, this need not be the case in every embodiment. Indeed, in some embodiments, the first time that a previously unrecognized set of function identifier and combination of parameters is received, it may be accompanied by its own pre-assigned packet index (e.g., one that 5 was assigned by the local device during execution of the marshalling process and transmitted to the remote device). In such a case, the packet dictionary 994 will associate the received packet index with the received set of function identifier and combination of parameters.

It should also be appreciated that when the function index table 990, the parameter 10 index table 992 and the packet dictionary 994 maintained by the remote device are identical to the function index table 790, the parameter index table 792 and the packet dictionary 794 maintained by the local device, it may be possible for the local device to share these objects with the remote device and keep them synchronized. Such an approach may simplify the unmarshalling process, as it would not require the same 15 object on the local device and the remote device to be twice populated. Sharing between the local device and the remote device can be achieved by making the function index table 990, the parameter index table 992 and the packet dictionary 994 accessible to both the remote device and the local device, e.g., via the network 450.

j. UNMARSHALLING (EXAMPLE)

20 An example description will now be provided in order to illustrate operation of the unmarshalling process for handling three received packets 810, 830 and 840 created using the previously described marshalling process. From Figs. 8B-8D, it can be recalled that packets 810, 830 and 840, which were sent from the local device to the remote device, include the following information:

25 Contents of PACKET 810:

```
function identifier: (Functioncall_1);
parameters: (Param1, Param2, Param3);
```

Contents of PACKET 830:

```
function identifier: (Functioncall_2);
parameter index: 0x3;
parameter: Param4;
```

Contents of PACKET 840:

packet index: 0x1

Fig. 10A shows the status of the packet dictionary 994, the function index table 990 and the parameter index table 992 prior to receipt or processing of packet 810. Quite simply, the packet dictionary 994, the function index table 990 and the parameter index table 992 are all empty.

Consider now three iterations of the unmarshalling process, as executed on packets 810, 830 and 840, respectively. The first iteration of the unmarshalling process begins at step S910, whereby packet 810 is received. The function identifier is Functioncall_1 and the combination (ordered set) of parameters is Param1, Param2, Param3. Step S920 reveals that there is no packet index included with packet 810 and therefore the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S940.

At step S940, it is checked whether packet 810 specifies a function identifier or a function index. Since packet 810 specifies function identifier Functioncall_1, and thus, with additional reference to Fig. 10B, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S944, whereby an entry 1012 is created in the function index table 990 for function identifier Functioncall_1, and a function index 0x1 is assigned to function identifier Functioncall_1 (using the same algorithm as in the marshalling process) and stored in the newly created entry 1012.

At step S950, it is checked whether packet 810 includes at least one parameter index. Since packet 810 only includes parameters and no parameter indexes, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S954. At step S954, it is checked whether packet 810 includes at least one parameter. Since this is indeed the case, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S956, whereby three new entries 1014, 1016, 1018 are created in the parameter index table 992, one each for Param1, Param2 and Param3, and parameter indexes 0x1, 0x2 and 0x3 are assigned to parameters Param1, Param2 and Param3 (using the same algorithm as in the marshalling process) and stored in the respective newly created entries 1014, 1016, 1018.

At step S958, a new entry 1020 is created in the packet dictionary 994 for the function identifier Functioncall_1 together with the combination of parameters Param1, Param2, Param3, to which a packet index 0x1 is assigned (using the same algorithm as in the marshalling process).

At step S930, the function identified by the function identifier `Functioncall_1` is called, using the parameters `Param1`, `Param2`, `Param3` as arguments. For example, a game screen can be rendered by the rendering server 100. The rendered game screen can be distributed to the central server 200 (via a remote procedure call in the 5 opposite direction) or directly to the participant for which the rendering instruction was carried out. Of course, it is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to rendering instructions or a gaming environment.

The second iteration of the unmarshalling process begins at step S910, whereby 10 packet 830 is received. The function identifier is `Functioncall_2`, which is received together with parameter index 0x3 and parameter `Param4`. Step S920 reveals that there is no packet index included with packet 830 and therefore the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S940.

At step S940, it is checked whether packet 830 specifies a function identifier or a 15 function index. Since packet 830 specifies function identifier `Functioncall_2`, and with additional reference to Fig. 10C, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S944, whereby an entry 1032 is created in the function index table 990 for function identifier `Functioncall_2`, and a function index 0x2 is assigned to function identifier `Functioncall_1` (using the same algorithm as in the marshalling process) and stored in the newly created entry 1032.

20 At step S950, it is checked whether packet 830 includes at least one parameter index. Since packet 830 includes only parameter index 0x3, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S952, where the parameters associated with parameter index 0x3 are retrieved from the parameter index table 992. In particular, it will be recalled that execution of step S956 in connection with unmarshalling of packet 810 resulted 25 parameter index 0x3 having been assigned to `Param3`. Therefore, during current execution of step S952, the parameter `Param3` is retrieved.

Next, at step S954, it is checked whether packet 830 at least one parameter. Since 30 this is indeed the case (namely, packet 830 includes parameter `Param4`), the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S956, whereby a new entry 1034 is created in the parameter index table 992 for `Param4`. In this case, parameter index 0x4 is

assigned to parameter Param4 using the same algorithm as in the marshalling process, and parameter index 0x4 is stored in the newly created entry 1034.

At step S958, a new entry 1036 is created in the packet dictionary 994 for the function identifier Functioncall_2 together with the combination of parameters Param3, 5 Param4, to which a packet index 0x2 is assigned (using the same algorithm as in the marshalling process).

At step S930, the function identified by the function identifier Functioncall_2 is called, using the parameters Param3, Param4 as arguments. For example, a game screen can be rendered by the rendering server 100. The rendered game screen can 10 be distributed to the central server 200 (via a remote procedure call in the opposite direction) or directly to the participant for which the rendering instruction was carried out. Of course, it is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to rendering instructions or a gaming environment.

The third iteration of the unmarshalling process begins at step S910, whereby packet 15 840 is received. Packet 840 includes packet index 0x1. Since step S920 will reveal that there is a packet index included with packet 840, the unmarshalling process proceeds to step S920.

At step S920, the function identifier and the parameters associated with packet index 20 0x1 are retrieved from the packet dictionary 994. In this case, the retrieved function identifier will be Functioncall_1 and the retrieved combination of parameters will be Param1, Param2, Param3.

The unmarshalling process then proceeds to step S930, where the function identified by the function identifier Functioncall_1 is called, using the parameters Param1, 25 Param2, Param3 as arguments. For example, a game screen can be rendered by the rendering server 100. The rendered game screen can be distributed to the central server 200 (via a remote procedure call in the opposite direction) or directly to the participant for which the rendering instruction was carried out. Of course, it is to be understood that the present invention is not limited to rendering instructions or a gaming environment.

30 Clearly, although packets 810 and 840 result in execution of the same function with the same parameters, the amount of network resources (bandwidth) required to transmit

packet 840 is less than the amount of network resources required to transmit packet 810.

As has already been mentioned in connection with the marshalling process, further improvements in transmission efficiency may be achievable in those cases where the 5 same combination of parameters is called, although possibly by different functions. To support the modified marshalling process described with reference to Fig. 7C, the unmarshalling process may be modified accordingly. In particular, with reference to Fig. 9C, a parameter combination index table 996 may be provided. The parameter combination index table 996 associates parameter combination indexes with respective 10 combinations of parameters. That is to say, each entry in the parameter combination index table 996 associates an ordered set of parameters to a particular code (referred to as a parameter combination index). In one non-limiting embodiment, the parameter combination index table 996 may be implemented as a database that is maintained in the RAM 103 or the storage medium 104 of the rendering server 100. In another non- 15 limiting embodiment, the parameter combination index table 996 can be maintained on external storage, which is accessible to the rendering 100 via a local storage area network (SAN), the network 450 or the network 400.

To make use of the parameter combination index table 996, a modification is made to the unmarshalling process. Specifically, with reference to Fig. 9D, a new step S946 is 20 introduced, where it would be checked whether the received packet includes a parameter combination index. In the affirmative, the corresponding combination of parameters would be retrieved from the parameter combination index table 996 at step S948, and the unmarshalling process would then rejoin the unmarshalling process of Fig. 9A at step S958. However, if the received packet was found not to include a 25 parameter combination index, the unmarshalling process proceeds to execute steps S950 through S956 as previously described. In addition, a new step S957 would be provided, whereby a new entry would be created in the parameter combination index table 996, and a parameter combination index would be assigned to the current combination of parameters and stored in association therewith. Assignment of the 30 parameter combination index to the current combination of parameters may proceed in accordance with the same parameter combination index assignment algorithm that was used by the local device.

It will be recalled that in a further variant, the function identifier may in fact be one of the parameters. In such a case, the “combination of parameters” includes at least one parameter that specifies the nature of the function being called. In order to accommodate the above variant, the function index table 990 is effectively subsumed 5 into the parameter index table 992. In such an embodiment, steps S940, S942 and S944 from the flowchart in Fig. 9A can effectively be omitted.

k. SEQUENCE INDEXING

It should be appreciated that still further efficiencies may be gained by making the observation that sequences of instructions may repeat, and by applying the above 10 described principles to this observation. Specifically, at the local device, the marshalling process for condensing sequences of received instructions may be represented by a flowchart illustrated in Fig. 11A. The marshalling process may be executed by the local stub 620 in the central server 200, although the presently described process can be applied wherever remote procedure calls are used.

15 At step S1110, an instruction is received. In a non-limiting example, the instruction may be a rendering instruction issued by a game state management process at the application layer. At step S1120, it is verified whether the received instruction completes a sequence of instructions, so as to proceed with consulting a sequence dictionary at step S1130. This can be determined in a number of ways. For example,

20 the marshalling process may consider that a fixed number of received instructions form a sequence. In another embodiment, the marshalling process may wait until several instructions are received and may process them to detect patterns therein and then begin processing the instructions in the oldest (least recent) sequence in accordance with the knowledge that there will be some repetition and therefore efficiency gain.

25 Other methodologies for determining whether a sequence has been completed will be understood as being within the scope of the present invention.

Assuming that a complete sequence of instructions has been detected (which will include, say, instructions 1 through N), the marshalling process proceeds to step S1130, where a sequence dictionary is consulted. At this point, reference is made to 30 Fig. 11B, which shows a sequence dictionary 1190. The sequence dictionary 1190 comprises entries that associate sequence indexes with respective sequences of

instructions. Each instruction represented in a given sequence of instructions may be associated with a respective function identifier and a respective combination of parameters. As such, each entry in the sequence dictionary 1190 associates a sequence index with a sequence of function identifiers and respective combinations of 5 parameters.

In one non-limiting embodiment, the sequence dictionary 1190 may be implemented as a database that is maintained in the central RAM 203 or the central storage medium 204. In another non-limiting embodiment, the sequence dictionary 1190 can be maintained on external storage, which is accessible to the central server 200 via a local 10 storage area network (SAN), the network 450 or the network 400.

At step S1130, the sequence dictionary 1190 is checked. In particular, the current sequence of function identifiers and respective combinations of parameters (in instructions 1 through N) is compared against sequences of function identifiers and respective combinations of parameters maintained in the entries of the sequence 15 dictionary 1190 with the aim of determining whether the sequence dictionary 1190 includes a sequence index corresponding to the current sequence of function identifiers and respective combinations of parameters. If the answer is affirmative, this will indicate that a packet representing this same sequence of instructions has already been created in the past, and that a sequence index has already been assigned to this 20 particular sequence of instructions. In that case, the marshalling process proceeds to step S1150, wherein the sequence index is retrieved from the sequence dictionary, and a packet is created such that it includes the sequence index. In addition, where one or more instructions refers to function arguments that are not considered to be condensable, these may be appended to the packet, such as in a pre-determined 25 location that will allow the recipient to determine which instruction the function arguments are associated with.

The marshalling process then proceeds to step S1160, wherein the packet is transmitted to the remote device (e.g., the rendering server 100) over the network 450. The packet also includes any necessary header or other information that would make it 30 suitable for transmission over the network 450. For example, the packet may be formatted in such a way as to alert the receiving entity that it carries a sequence index as opposed to a packet index, a function identifier or parameters.

However, if at step S1130 it was determined that the sequence dictionary 1190 did not include a sequence index for the current sequence of instructions, the marshalling process proceeds to step S1170. This includes execution of steps 720 from the flowchart of Fig. 7A and all steps subsequent thereto, for each instruction in the 5 sequence of instructions. In addition, the marshalling process executes step S1180, wherein an entry is created in the sequence dictionary 1190 for the current sequence of function identifiers and respective combinations of parameters (in instructions 1 through N), and a sequence index is assigned thereto and stored in the sequence dictionary 1190.

10 It will be appreciated that in an actual implementation, it is not necessary for the marshalling process to wait at step 1120. Instead, it is envisaged that the marshalling process may effect pre-processing on the instructions that have been received thus far, which can include any of the steps in Fig. 7A with the exception of step S750. If it turns out that a sequence index will be found for the sequence currently being compiled, then 15 this pre-processing will turn out to have been wasteful, but in the event that a sequence index is not found, such pre-processing will minimize the latency required to create the packet.

An example description will now be provided in order to illustrate operation of the marshalling process in the creation of three packets from three sequences of three 20 instructions per sequence. That is to say, consider the following nine instructions:

```
Functioncall_1(Param1, Param2, Param3);  
Functioncall_2(Param3, Param4);  
Functioncall_1(Param1, Param2, Param3);  
Functioncall_1(Param1, Param2, Param3);  
25 Functioncall_2(Param3, Param4);  
Functioncall_3(Param4, Param5, Param6);  
Functioncall_1(Param1, Param2, Param3);  
Functioncall_2(Param3, Param4);  
Functioncall_1(Param1, Param2, Param3).
```

30 It will be noted that the first, third, fourth, seventh and ninth instructions are identical and refer to the same function identifier Functioncall_1 and the same function arguments Param1, Param2 and Param3. It will also be noted that the second, fifth

and eighth instructions are identical and refer to the same function identifier `Functioncall_2` and the same function arguments `Param3`, `Param4`. It is assumed that all function arguments are condensable, and therefore qualify as “parameters” as used herein. However, this assumption is made merely for the sake of simplicity and it
5 need not be the case in every embodiment.

Fig. 12A shows the status of the packet dictionary 794, the function index table 790, the parameter index table 792 and the sequence dictionary 1190 prior to receipt or processing of the first instruction. Quite simply, the packet dictionary 794, the function index table 790, the parameter index table 792 and the sequence dictionary 1190 are
10 all empty. This scenario remains substantially the same until the third instruction (i.e., the last instruction in a sequence of 3 instructions) is received. That is to say, whereas in accordance with the marshalling process of Fig. 7A, packets would be generated one at a time, this is not the case in the marshalling process of Fig. 11A, because packets are not released until a complete sequence of instructions has been received.
15 In this non-limiting case, used only for purposes of example, a complete sequence is considered to include three instructions.

Fig. 12B shows the status of the packet dictionary 794, the function index table 790, the parameter index table 792 and the sequence dictionary 1190 after having received and processed the third instruction. Here it is seen that the parameter index table 792
20 includes four entries, one for each of `Param1`, `Param2`, `Param3` and `Param4`, which are associated with parameter indexes 0x1, 0x2, 0x3 and 0x4, respectively. The function index table 790 includes two entries, one for each of `Functioncall_1` and `Functioncall_2`, which are associated with function indexes 0x1 and 0x2, respectively. The packet dictionary 794 includes two entries, one for `Functioncall_1`
25 together with the combination of `Param1`, `Param2`, `Param3` (associated with packet index 0x1) and one for `Functioncall_2` together with the combination of `Param3`, `Param4` (associated with packet index 0x2). Finally, the sequence dictionary 1190 includes one entry for the first sequence of three instructions, and which is associated with sequence index 0x1.
30 Fig. 12B also shows that three packets 1210, 1220, 1230 have been issued, corresponding to the three instructions in the first sequence:

Contents of PACKET 1210:

```

        function identifier: (Functioncall_1);
        parameters: (Param1, Param2, Param3);

```

Contents of PACKET 1220:

5 function identifier: (Functioncall_2);
 parameter index: 0x3;
 parameter: Param4;

Contents of PACKET 1230:

```

        packet index: 0x1

```

10 It should be appreciated that in some embodiments, packets 1210, 1220, 1230 may include, where appropriate, a flag to allow the recipient to distinguish between a packet index, a function identifier, a function index, a parameter and a parameter index.

15 Fig. 12C shows the status of the packet dictionary 794, the function index table 790, the parameter index table 792 and the sequence dictionary 1190 after having received and processed the sixth instruction. Here it is seen that the parameter index table 792

includes two new entries, one for each of Param5 and Param6, which are associated with parameter indexes 0x5 and 0x6, respectively. The function index table 790 includes one new entry for Functioncall_3, which is associated with function index 0x3. The packet dictionary 794 includes one new entry for Functioncall_3 together

20 with the combination of Param5, Param6, which is associated with packet index 0x3. Finally, the sequence dictionary 1190 includes a new second entry for the second sequence of three instructions, and which is associated with sequence index 0x2.

Fig. 12C also shows that three packets 1240, 1250, 1260 have been issued, corresponding to the three instructions in the second sequence:

25 Contents of PACKET 1240:

```

        packet index: 0x1;

```

Contents of PACKET 1250:

```

        function identifier: (Functioncall_3);
        parameter index: 0x4;
        parameters: Param5, Param6;

```

Contents of PACKET 1260:

```

        packet index: 0x1

```

Now consider what happens when processing the seventh, eighth and ninth instructions. It is seen that these three instructions in the current (third) sequence are identical to the three instructions in the first sequence, for which there is already a sequence index in the sequence dictionary 1190. As such, branch S1150 is taken after 5 step S1130 in Fig. 11A, and there is no change to the status of the packet dictionary 794, the function index table 790, the parameter index table 792 or the sequence dictionary 1190 relative to Fig. 12C. Moreover, only one packet will be transmitted, representing the sequence of three instructions. Specifically, as shown in Fig. 13, packet 1270 is a very short packet that includes sequence index 0x1.

10 **Contents of PACKET 1270:**

Sequence index: 0x1.

This is in contrast to transmitting three packets, one for each of the seventh, eighth and ninth instruction. Those skilled in the art will appreciate that packet 1270 may include a flag or header to indicate that it is conveying a sequence index rather than, say, a 15 packet index.

It should be appreciated that in some embodiments, the detection of sequences can be done based on the packets output by the marshalling process of Fig. 7A, rather than directly on the basis of received instructions. That is to say, once packets have been created and are ready to be transmitted in accordance with the marshalling process of 20 Fig. 7A, it is possible to analyze these packets in order to identify sequences of packets (rather than instructions) and issue condensed packets that include sequence numbers where possible.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that a complementary unmarshalling process can be carried out at the remote device (e.g., the rendering server 100), so as to 25 decode the sequence identifier where one is present in the incoming packet and, in the alternative, to assign a sequence identifier to an incoming sequence of packets.

I. SHARED PACKET DICTIONARY

It should be appreciated that in the course of the game state management process, due to the large volume of objects to be rendered, there may be a need to issue two or 30 more rendering instructions such that they are processed at least partly in parallel. Another factor that may contribute to the need to execute multiple rendering

instructions contemporaneously is where multiple participants are involved in the game. To satisfy this need, multiple local stubs can be running concurrently over the same period of time. In a simple scenario, which is used merely for illustrative purposes and is not to be viewed as limiting, a separate local stub is associated with each participant 5 in the game. Each of the local stubs is invoked repeatedly so as to render a game scene for the corresponding participant with acceptable motion quality. The multiple local stubs cooperate with corresponding remote stubs in order to carry out multiple parallel executions of step S405 of the game state management process.

Referring now to Figs. 14A and 14B, three local stubs 1410, 1415, 1420 are 10 instantiated on the same local device 1430. The local device 1430 executes the game state management process. The local stubs 1410, 1415, 1420 make remote procedure calls to corresponding remote stubs 1450, 1455, 1460 disposed on a common remote device 1470. It is to be understood that although the number of local and remote stubs is three, this is not to be considered a limitation of the present invention. In a non- 15 limiting embodiment, the local device 1430 can be the central server 200 and the remote device 1470 can be the rendering server 100. The local device 1430 and the remote device 1470 may be connected by the network 450. The function calls made by local stub 1410 are marshaled into packets, which are then sent to and serviced by remote stub 1450. This can result in the rendering of game screens for a first 20 participant in the game. Likewise, function calls made by local stub 1415 are marshaled into packets, which are then sent to and serviced by remote stub 1455, while function calls made by local stub 1420 are marshaled into packets, which are then sent to and serviced by remote stub 1460. This results in the rendering of game screens for a second and a third participant in the game, respectively.

25 In the non-limiting embodiment shown in Fig. 14A, the three local stubs 1410, 1415, 1420 have access to respective memory spaces 1440, 1445, 1449. Memory space 1440 includes a function index table 1442, a parameter index table 1444 and a packet dictionary 1446 for use by local stub 1410. Memory space 1440 may also include a sequence dictionary 1448 when useful or desired. The function index table 1442, the 30 parameter index table 1444, the packet dictionary 1446 and the sequence dictionary 1448 are accessed by local stub 1410 when executing a marshalling process for participant #1. For their part, memory spaces 1445 and 1449 are similarly configured,

with a respective function index table, a respective parameter index table, a respective packet dictionary and possibly also a respective sequence dictionary. These separate memory spaces 1445, 1450 are separately accessed by local stubs 1415, 1420 when executing distinct marshalling processes for participants #2 and #3, respectively.

5 At the remote device 1470, the three remote stubs 1450, 1455, 1460 have access to respective memory spaces 1480, 1485, 1490. Memory space 1480 includes a function index table 1482, a parameter index table 1484 and a packet dictionary 1486 for use by remote stub 1450. Memory space 1480 may also include a sequence dictionary 1488 when useful or desired. The function index table 1482, the parameter index table 10 1484, the packet dictionary 1486 and the sequence dictionary 1488 are accessed by remote stub 1450 when executing an unmarshalling process for participant #1. For their part, memory spaces 1485 and 1490 are similarly configured, with a respective function index table, a respective parameter index table, a respective packet dictionary and possibly also a respective sequence dictionary. These separate memory spaces 15 1485, 1490 are separately accessed by remote stubs 1455, 1460 when executing distinct unmarshalling processes for participants #2 and #3, respectively

In another non-limiting embodiment, shown in Fig. 14B, the three local stubs 1410, 1415 1420 have access to a shared memory space 1461. The shared memory space 1461 includes a common function index table 1462, a common parameter index table 20 1464 and a common packet dictionary 1466. The shared memory space 1461 may also include a common sequence dictionary 1468 when useful or desired. Therefore, the function index table 1462, the parameter index table 1464, the packet dictionary 1466 and the sequence dictionary 1468 are commonly accessed by local stubs 1410, 1415, 1420 executing distinct marshalling processes for participants #1, #2 and #3, 25 respectively.

The shared memory space 1461 may be configured in various ways. For example, the shared memory space 1461 can be maintained in the central RAM 203 or the central storage medium 204. In another non-limiting embodiment, the shared memory space 1461 can be maintained on external storage, which is accessible to the central server 30 200 via a local storage area network (SAN), the network 450 or the network 400.

At the remote device 1470, the three remote stubs 1450, 1455 1460 have access to a shared memory space 1475. The shared memory space 1475 includes a common

function index table 1492, a common parameter index table 1494 and a common packet dictionary 1496. The shared memory space 1475 may also include a common sequence dictionary 1498 when useful or desired. Therefore, the function index table 1492, the parameter index table 1494, the packet dictionary 1496 and the sequence 5 dictionary 1498 are commonly accessed by remote stubs 1450, 1455, 1460 executing distinct unmarshalling processes for participants #1, #2 and #3, respectively.

The shared memory space 1475 may be configured in various ways. For example, the shared memory space 1475 can be maintained in the RAM 103 or the storage medium 104. In another non-limiting embodiment, the shared memory space 1475 can be 10 maintained on external storage, which is accessible to the rendering server 100 via a local storage area network (SAN), the network 450 or the network 400.

It will be appreciated that use of a shared memory space 1461 by local stubs 1410, 1415, 1420 and use of the shared memory space 1475 by remote stubs 1450, 1455, 1460 allows function calls to be even more efficient in terms of bandwidth usage. That 15 is to say, efficiency rises with repetition in function calls and repetition in function calls is more likely when measured across multiple participants rather than on a per-participant basis.

Reference is now made to Fig. 15, which illustrates a non-limiting embodiment in which three local stubs 1510, 1515, 1520 are instantiated on three separate local devices 20 1530, 1535, 1540. The local stubs 1510, 1515, 1520 make remote procedure calls to corresponding remote stubs 1550, 1555, 1560. In one embodiment, remote stubs 1550, 1555, 1560 are instantiated on a single remote device 1570. In other embodiments, the remote stubs 1550, 1555, 1560 may be instantiated on separate remote devices. It is to be understood that although the number of local and remote 25 stubs is three, this is not to be considered a limitation of the present invention.

In one non-limiting embodiment, the local devices 1530, 1545, 1540 can be sub-portions of a distributed central server 200, while the remote device 1570 can be the rendering server 100. In such an embodiment, the game state management process may be run by one of the local devices 1530, 1535, 1540 that is designated as the 30 "master", or the game state management process may be collaboratively / distributedly executed by the local devices 1530, 1535, 1540.

In another non-limiting embodiment, the local devices 1530, 1545, 1540 can be game consoles, while the remote device 1570 can be the rendering server 100 or the central server 200. In such an embodiment, the game state management process may be run by one of the game consoles that is designated as the “master”, or the game state management process may be collaboratively / distributedly executed by the various game consoles.

5 Local stub 1510 responds to the receipt of instructions by executing a marshalling process to create packets, which are sent to and serviced by remote stub 1550. This can result in the rendering of game screens for a first participant in the game. 10 Likewise, local stubs 1515, 1520 execute their own marshalling processes that result in the transmission of packets to remote stubs 1555, 1560, respectively. This results in the rendering of game screens for a second and a third participant in the game, respectively.

15 The three local stubs 1510, 1515, 1520 have access to a shared memory space 1580. 20 The shared memory space 1580 includes a common function index table 1582, a common parameter index table 1584 and a common packet dictionary 1586. The shared memory space 1580 may also include a common sequence dictionary 1588 when useful or desired. Therefore, the function index table 1582, the parameter index table 1584, the packet dictionary 1586 and the sequence dictionary 1588 are commonly accessed by local stubs 1510, 1515, 1520 executing distinct marshalling processes for participants #1, #2 and #3, respectively.

25 The shared memory space 1580 may be configured in various ways. For example, one possibility is for the shared memory space 1580 to be maintained in the memory (e.g., RAM or other storage medium) of one of the local devices 1530, 1535, 1540 and continuously accessed by the local stubs 1510, 1515, 1520, including those that are outside of the local device where the shared memory space is located.

Another possibility, shown in Fig. 15, is for the shared memory space 1580 to be maintained on external storage, which is accessible to the local devices 1530, 1535, 1540 via a storage area network (SAN) and/or the network 450 or the network 400. 30 Yet another possibility is for the shared memory space 1580 to be replicated within each of the local devices 1530, 1535, 1540 (e.g., within a cache) so as to provide faster access to the function index table 1582, the parameter index table 1584, the common

packet dictionary 1586 (and the sequence dictionary 1588, when used). In this way, the local devices 1530, 1535, 1540 can carry out a protocol for building copies of the shared memory space 1580 in each of the local devices 1530, 1535, 1540.

Since the remote stubs 1550, 1555, 1560 are executed by a single remote device 5 1570, the may be configured as previously described with reference to Fig. 14B.

Some of the above examples have focused on remote procedure calls that involve rendering commands in a gaming environment. However, this is not to be considered a limitation of the present invention. For example, another suitable example of a 10 remote procedure call in a gaming environment includes an instruction to initialize a process. Still other examples of a remote procedure call in a gaming environment include fetching the leader-board, finding other players or retrieving game news. Moreover, it should be appreciated that the present invention is not limited to a gaming 15 environment.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that efficiencies may also arise by compressing 15 remote procedure calls in the opposite direction, i.e., in the course of issuing remote procedure calls from the rendering server 100 to the central server 200 in order to send rendered game screens thereto, for distribution to the client devices 300.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that certain adaptations and modifications of the 20 described embodiments can be made. Therefore, the above discussed embodiments are to be considered illustrative and not restrictive. Also it should be appreciated that additional elements that may be needed for operation of certain embodiments of the present invention have not been described or illustrated as they are assumed to be within the purview of the person of ordinary skill in the art. Moreover, certain 25 embodiments of the present invention may be free of, may lack and/or may function without any element that is not specifically disclosed herein.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for execution by a local device connectable to a remote device, the
5 method comprising:

obtaining at least one instruction for execution by the remote device;
creating a packet representing the at least one instruction; and
releasing the packet towards the remote device;
wherein creating the packet comprises:

10 consulting a memory to determine whether a packet index has already
been assigned to the at least one instruction;
when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it
contains the packet index.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the at least one instruction comprises an
15 identifier of a function for execution by the remote device and a combination of
parameters for use in execution of the function.

3. The method according to claim 2, wherein to determine whether a packet index has
already been assigned to the at least one instruction comprises determining
whether a packet dictionary in the memory comprises an entry corresponding to the
20 identifier of the function and the combination of parameters.

4. The method according to claim 2, wherein creating the packet further comprises:
when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not
contain the identifier of the function or any of the parameters in the
combination of parameters.

25 5. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein the at least one
instruction is issued by an application running on the local device.

6. The method according to claim 5, wherein the application is a game state
management process.

7. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 6, wherein the at least one
30 instruction comprises at least one instruction for rendering at least part of a game
screen of a video game.

8. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the at least one instruction comprises at least one instruction for fetching a leaderboard for the video game.
9. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the at least one instruction comprises at least one instruction for finding other players of the video game.
- 5 10. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein the at least one instruction comprises at least one instruction for retrieving game news about the video game.
- 10 11. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein the obtaining, creating and releasing are executed by a first marshalling process running on the local device, wherein the at least one instruction comprises at least one first instruction, wherein the first device is a first local device, and wherein the method further comprises additional steps executed by a second marshalling process running on a second local device, the additional steps comprising:
 - 15 obtaining at least one second instruction for execution by the remote device;
 - creating a second packet representing the at least one second instruction; and
 - releasing the second packet towards the remote device;
 - wherein creating the second packet comprises:
 - 20 consulting the memory to second determine whether a second packet index has already been assigned to the at least one second instruction;
 - when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the second packet index.
- 25 12. The method according to claim 11, wherein the first and second packet indexes are identical when the first and second instructions are identical.
13. The method according to claim 11 or claim 12, wherein the memory is a memory space that is shared by the first and second local devices.
14. The method according to claim 11, wherein the at least one first instruction 30 comprises an identifier of a first function for execution by the remote device and a first combination of parameters for use in execution of the first function and wherein the at least one second instruction comprises an identifier of a second function for

execution by the remote device and a second combination of parameters for use in execution of the second function.

15. The method according to claim 14, wherein creating the second packet further comprises:

5 when the second determining is positive, formulating the second packet so that it does not contain the identifier of the second function or any of the parameters in the second combination of parameters.

16. The method according to claim 2, wherein the determining is first determining, and wherein creating the packet further comprises:

10 when the first determining is negative:

 consulting the memory to second determine whether a parameter index has already been assigned to the combination of parameters;

 when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the parameter combination index.

15 17. The method according to claim 16, wherein creating the packet further comprises:

 when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not contain any of the parameters.

18. The method according to claim 2, wherein the determining is first determining, and wherein creating the packet further comprises:

20 when the first determining is negative:

 consulting the memory to second determine whether a parameter index has already been assigned to each of the individual parameters in the combination of parameters;

 when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the parameter index for each the parameters in the combination of parameters.

25 19. The method according to claim 18, wherein creating the packet further comprises:

 when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not contain any of the parameters.

30 20. The method according to claim 19, wherein creating the packet further comprises:

 when the second determining is positive:

assigning a parameter combination index to the combination of parameters;
and

storing the parameter combination index in the memory in association with
the combination of parameters.

5 21. The method according to claim 20, wherein the assigning is carried out in
accordance with a process that is known to the remote device.

22. The method according to claim 20, wherein creating the packet further comprises:
when the second determining is positive:

formulating the packet so that it further contains the parameter combination
10 index.

23. The method according to claim 1, wherein creating the packet further comprises:
when the determining is negative:

identifying one or more parameters that are not associated with previously
assigned parameter indexes;

15 for each of the one or more parameters, assigning a respective parameter
index and storing the respective parameter index in a parameter index
table in association with the parameter.

24. The method according to claim 23, wherein the assigning is carried out in
accordance with a process that is known to the remote device.

20 25. The method according to claim 23, wherein creating the packet further comprises:
when the determining is negative:

formulating the packet so that it contains each of the one or more
parameters.

26. The method according to claim 25, wherein creating the packet further comprises:
when the determining is negative:

formulating the packet so that it further contains the parameter index
associated with each of the one or more parameters.

27. The method according to claim 25, wherein creating the packet further comprises:
when the determining is negative:

30 identifying one or more parameters to which a parameter index has already
been assigned;

formulating the packet so that it further contains the parameter index associated with each of the one or more parameters.

28. The method according to claim 27, wherein when the packet is formulated, it does not contain any of the one or more parameters to which a parameter index had 5 already been assigned.

29. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 28, wherein releasing the packet comprises placing the packet in an output queue of a communication unit.

30. The method according to any one of claims 2, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22, wherein the identifier of the function for execution by the remote device is encoded 10 in at least one of the parameters.

31. An apparatus connectable to a remote device, the apparatus comprising:
an interface for obtaining at least one instruction for execution by the remote device;
a processing unit for creating a packet representing the at least one instruction and for releasing the packet via the interface towards the remote device;
15 a memory comprising a shared packet dictionary;
wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is configured for:
consulting the shared packet dictionary to determine whether a packet index has already been assigned to the at least one instruction;
20 when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the packet index.

32. The apparatus according to claim 31, wherein the at least one instruction comprises an identifier of a function for execution by the remote device and a combination of parameters for use in execution of the function.

25 33. The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein to determine whether a packet index has already been assigned to the at least one instruction, the processing unit is configured for determining whether the shared packet dictionary comprises an entry corresponding to the identifier of the function and the combination of parameters.

34. The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein to create the packet, the processing 30 unit is further configured for:

when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not contain the identifier of the function or any of the parameters in the combination of parameters.

35. The apparatus according to claim 31, wherein the processing unit is further 5 configured for running an application that issues the at least one instruction.

36. The apparatus according to claim 35, wherein the application comprises a video game and wherein the at least one instruction is rendering instruction for a game screen of the video game.

37. The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein the memory further comprise a 10 parameter combination index table, wherein the determining is first determining, and wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:
when the first determining is negative:

consulting the parameter combination index table to second determine whether a parameter combination index has already been assigned to the 15 combination of parameters;

when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the parameter combination index.

38. The apparatus according to claim 37, wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

20 when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not contain any of the parameters.

39. The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein the determining is first determining, wherein the memory comprises a parameter index table, and wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

25 when the first determining is negative:

consulting the parameter index table to second determine whether a parameter index has already been assigned to each of the individual parameters in the combination of parameters;

when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it 30 contains the parameter index for each the parameters in the combination of parameters.

40. The apparatus according to claim 39, wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the second determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it does not contain any of the parameters.

5 41. The apparatus according to claim 40, wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the second determining is positive:

assigning a parameter combination index to the combination of parameters; and

10 storing the parameter combination index in the memory in association with the combination of parameters.

42. The apparatus according to claim 41, wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the second determining is positive:

15 formulating the packet so that it further contains the parameter combination index.

43. The apparatus according to claim 31, wherein the memory comprises a parameter index table, and wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

20 when the determining is negative:

identifying one or more parameters for which a parameter index has not been previously assigned;

for each of the one or more parameter, assigning a respective parameter index and storing the respective parameter index in the parameter index table in association with the parameter.

25 44. The apparatus according to claim 41, wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the determining is negative:

30 formulating the packet so that it contains each of the one or more parameters.

45. The apparatus according to claim 44, wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is further configured for:

when the determining is negative:

formulating the packet so that it further contains a parameter index associated with each of the one or more parameter.

46. The apparatus according to claim 44, wherein to create the packet, the processing

5 unit is further configured for:

when the determining is negative:

identifying one or more parameters for which a parameter index has already been assigned;

formulating the packet so that it further contains the parameter index 10 associated with each of the one or more parameters.

47. The apparatus according to claim 46, wherein when the packet is formulated, it does not contain any of said one or more parameters.

48. The apparatus according to any one of claims 31 to 47, wherein the interface comprises an output queue, wherein the packet is released by placing it in the 15 output queue.

49. The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein the identifier of the function for execution by the remote device is encoded in at least one of the parameters.

50. The apparatus according to claim 31, connected to the remote device over a private data network.

20 51. In combination:

the apparatus of any one of claims 31 to 46; and

a second apparatus, comprising:

an interface for obtaining an identifier of at least one second instruction for execution by the remote device;

25 a processing unit for creating a second packet representing the at least one second instruction and releasing the second packet via the interface towards the remote device;

wherein to create the second packet, the processing unit is configured for:

30 consulting the shared packet dictionary to second determine whether a packet index has already been assigned to the at least one second instruction;

when the second determining is positive, formulating the second packet so that it contains the second packet index.

52. The combination according to claim 51, wherein the first and second packet indexes are identical when the first and second instructions are identical.
- 5 53. The combination according to claim 51, wherein the first instruction comprises an identifier of a first function and a first combination of parameters for use in execution of the first function and wherein the second instruction comprises an identifier of a second function and a second combination of parameters for use in execution of the second function.
- 10 54. The combination according to claim 53, wherein to create the first packet, the processing entity of the first apparatus is further configured for:
 - when the first determining is positive, formulating the second packet so that it does not contain the identifier of the second function or any of the parameters in the second combination of parameters.
- 15 55. The combination according to claim 54, wherein to create the second packet, the processing entity of the second apparatus is further configured for:
 - when the second determining is positive, formulating the second packet so that it does not contain the identifier of the second function or any of the parameters in the second combination of parameters.
- 20 56. The combination according to any one of claims 51 to 55, wherein the first and second apparatuses devices are embodied in a cloud gaming server.
57. The combination according to claim 56, wherein the shared packet dictionary is part of the cloud gaming server.
- 25 58. The combination according to claim 51, wherein the shared packet dictionary is accessible to the first and second apparatuses over a storage area network.
59. The combination according to any one of claims 51-58, wherein the first apparatus is connected to the second apparatus over a computer network.
60. The combination according to any one of claims 51-58, wherein the first apparatus is connected to the second apparatus in a data center.
- 30 61. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions for execution by at least one processor of a local device, wherein execution of the instructions by the at

least one processor of the local device causes the local device to implement a method that comprises:

obtaining an identifier of at least one command for execution by the remote device;

5 creating a packet representing the at least one command; and
releasing the packet towards the remote device;
wherein creating the packet comprises:

consulting a memory to determine whether a packet index has already been assigned to the at least one command;

10 when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the packet index.

62. A method for execution by a local device connectable to a remote device, the method comprising:

obtaining a sequence of instructions for execution by the remote device;

15 creating a packet representing the sequence of instructions; and
releasing the packet towards the remote device;
wherein creating the packet comprises:

consulting a memory to determine whether a sequence index has already been assigned to the sequence of instructions;

20 when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the sequence index.

63. The method according to claim 62, wherein creating the packet further comprises:

when the determining is negative:

creating a packet for each instruction in the sequence of instructions; and

25 releasing each packet towards the remote device.

64. An apparatus connectable to a remote device, the apparatus comprising:

an interface for obtaining a sequence of instructions for execution by the remote device;

a processing unit for creating a packet representing the sequence of instructions
30 and for releasing the packet via the interface towards the remote device;

a memory comprising a sequence dictionary;

wherein to create the packet, the processing unit is configured for:

consulting the sequence dictionary to determine whether a sequence index has already been assigned to the sequence of instructions; when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the packet index.

5 65. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions for execution by at least one processor of a local device, wherein execution of the instructions by the at least one processor of the local device causes the local device to implement a method that comprises:

obtaining a sequence of commands for execution by the remote device;

10 creating a packet representing the sequence of commands; and

releasing the packet towards the remote device;

wherein creating the packet comprises:

consulting a memory to determine whether a sequence index has already been assigned to the sequence of commands;

15 when the determining is positive, formulating the packet so that it contains the sequence index.

66. A method for execution by a second device connectable to a first device, comprising:

obtaining from the first device a packet comprising a packet index associated 20 with a remote function call placed by the first device;

consulting a packet dictionary based on the packet index to identify a function associated with the remote function call and to determine a combination of parameters associated with the remote function call;

carrying out the function using the parameters in the combination of parameters.

25 67. The method according to claim 66, wherein to determine the combination of parameters associated with the remote function call, the method comprises determining from the packet dictionary, based on the packet index, a combination of parameter indexes associated with the combination of parameters and consulting a parameter index table on a basis of the parameter indexes in the combination of 30 parameter indexes to determine the parameters in the combination of parameters.

68. The method according to claim 66, wherein to identify the function associated with the remote function call, the method comprises determining from the packet

dictionary, based on the packet index, at least one function index and consulting a function table on a basis of the function index to identify the function associated with the remote function call.

69. The method according to claim 68, further comprising, during one or more
5 preceding steps:

obtaining from the first device a packet comprising an identity of the function associated with the remote function call;

storing the identity of the function in the function table in association with the function index.

10 70. The method according to claim 69, further comprising, during the one or more preceding steps:

obtaining from the first device at least one packet comprising the parameters associated with the remote function call;

storing the parameters in the parameter index table in association with
15 respective ones of the parameter indexes.

71. The method according to claim 70, further comprising, during the one or more preceding steps:

obtaining from the first device a packet comprising the function index and a combination of parameter indexes associated with the combination of
20 parameters;

storing the function index and the combination of parameter indexes in the packet dictionary in association with the packet index.

72. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions for execution by at least one processor of a server, wherein execution of the instructions by the at least
25 one processor of the server causes the server to implement a method that comprises:

obtaining from a computing apparatus connected to the server a packet comprising a packet index associated with a remote function call placed by the first device;

30 consulting a packet dictionary based on the packet index to identify a function associated with the remote function call and to determine a combination of parameters associated with the remote function call;

carrying out the function using the parameters in the combination of parameters.

73. A method for execution by a second device connectable to a first device, comprising:

5 obtaining from the first device a packet comprising at least a plurality of parameter indexes associated with a remote function call placed by the first device;

consulting a parameter index table on a basis of the plurality of parameter indexes to determine a plurality of parameters in a combination of parameters associated with the remote function call;

10 identifying a function associated with the remote function call; and

carrying out the function for the first device at the second device using the parameters in the combination of parameters.

74. The method according to claim 73, wherein the packet comprises a function index, and wherein identifying a function associated with the remote function call comprises consulting a function table on a basis of the function index.

15 75. The method according to claim 73, further comprising:

storing a packet index in the packet dictionary in association with the function index and the combination of parameter indexes.

76. The method according to claim 75, further comprising:

20 assigning the packet index to the function index and the combination of parameter indexes, wherein assigning is carried out in accordance with a process that is known to the first device.

77. A method for execution by a second device connectable to a first device, comprising:

25 obtaining from the first device a packet comprising a sequence index associated with a sequence of instructions issued by the first device;

consulting a sequence dictionary based on the sequence index to identify a plurality of functions respectively associated with the sequence of remote procedure calls and to determine, for each function, a respective combination 30 of parameters;

carrying out the plurality of functions using the parameters in the respective combination of parameters.

78. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing instructions for execution by at least one processor of a local device in an on-line gaming system, wherein execution of the instructions by the at least one processor of the local device causes implementation of:

5 a game state management process for managing game state for a plurality of participants in a game;

10 a plurality of local stubs for obtaining commands issued by the game state management process, wherein upon obtaining a given one of the commands, a given one of the local stubs is configured to consult a packet dictionary shared among the plurality of local stubs in an attempt to find a packet identifier associated with the given instruction, and wherein upon a packet identifier being found, the given one of the local stubs is configured to release a packet containing the packet identifier towards a remote stub for remote execution of the given instruction at a device remote from the local device.

15

79. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to claim 78, wherein the local device is a central server and wherein the remote device is a rendering server equipped with a GPU.

80. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to claim 78 or claim 79, wherein the at least one processor comprises a plurality of processors that implement the game state management process collaboratively.

81. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to any one of claims 78 to 80, wherein the local stubs are associated with respective participants in the game.

82. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to any one of claims 78 to 81, wherein the commands comprise rendering instructions.

83. The non-transitory computer-readable medium according to any one of claims 78 to 82, wherein the given one of the local stubs is configured to receive a rendered game scene in response to having released the packet towards the remote device.

84. A computing apparatus, comprising:

30 an interface for connection to a remote device;

 at least one processor for executing a game state management process to manage game state for a plurality of participants in a game;

5 a memory storing a packet dictionary;
the at least one processor implementing a plurality of local stubs for obtaining
instructions issued by the game state management process, wherein upon
obtaining a given set of instructions, a given one of the local stubs is
configured to consult the packet dictionary shared among the plurality of
local stubs in an attempt to find a packet identifier associated with the given
set of instructions, and wherein upon a packet identifier being found, the
given one of the local stubs is configured to release a packet containing the
packet identifier towards the remote device via the interface for remote
10 execution of the given set of instructions.

85. The computing apparatus according to claim 84, implemented in a central server,
wherein the remote device comprises at least one rendering server equipped with a
GPU.

86. The computing apparatus according to claim 84 or claim 85, wherein the at least
15 one processor comprises a plurality of processors that implement the game state
management process collaboratively.

87. The computing apparatus according to any one of claims 84 to 86, wherein the local
stubs are associated with respective participants in the game.

88. The computing apparatus according to any one of claims 84 to 87, wherein the
20 commands are rendering instructions.

89. The computing apparatus according to claim any one of claims 84 to 88, the given
one of the local stubs being configured to receive a rendered game scene in
response to having released the packet towards the remote device.

90. A server system, comprising:

25 a game state server implementing a game state management process for at
least one participant of a video game, the game state server adjusting a state
of the video game based on input received over a network from at least one
device associated with the at least one participant; and

30 a rendering server for rendering game screens for the at least one participant
and for causing transmission of the game screens to the at least one
participant over the network, the rendering server carrying out said rendering
based on rendering commands that are compressed by the game state

server, transmitted to the rendering server and decompressed by the rendering server.

91. The server system according to claim 90, further comprising a second network over which the compressed rendering commands are transmitted from the game state 5 server to the rendering server.

92. The server system according to claim 91, wherein the second network comprises a low-latency private data network.

93. The server system according to any one of claims 90 to 92, wherein to compress the rendering commands, the game state server is configured for obtaining a set of 10 rendering commands, consulting a packet dictionary in an attempt to determine whether a packet representing the set of rendering instructions has previously been transmitted to the rendering server and, when the attempt is successful, transmitting an index of the packet to the rendering server.

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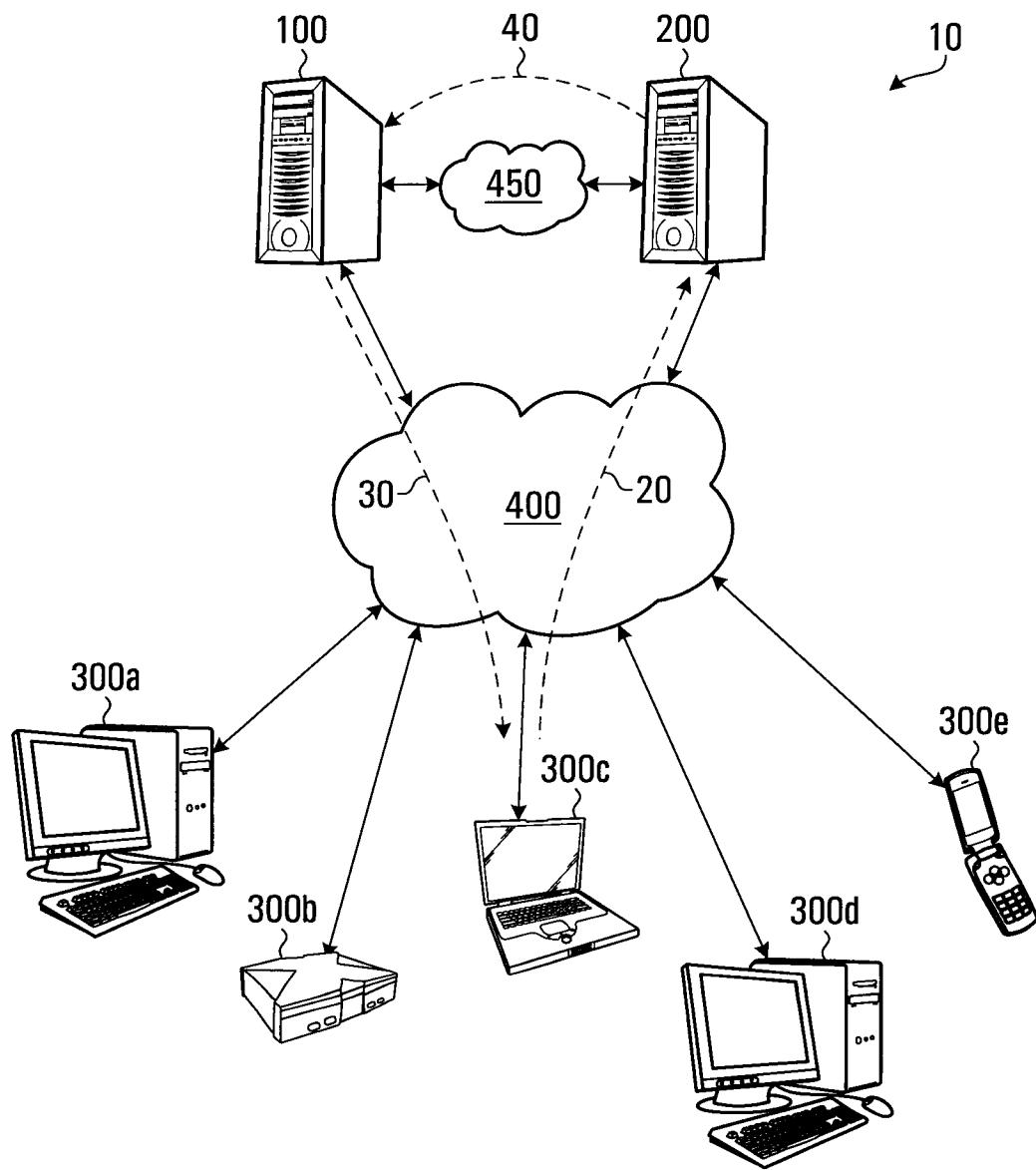
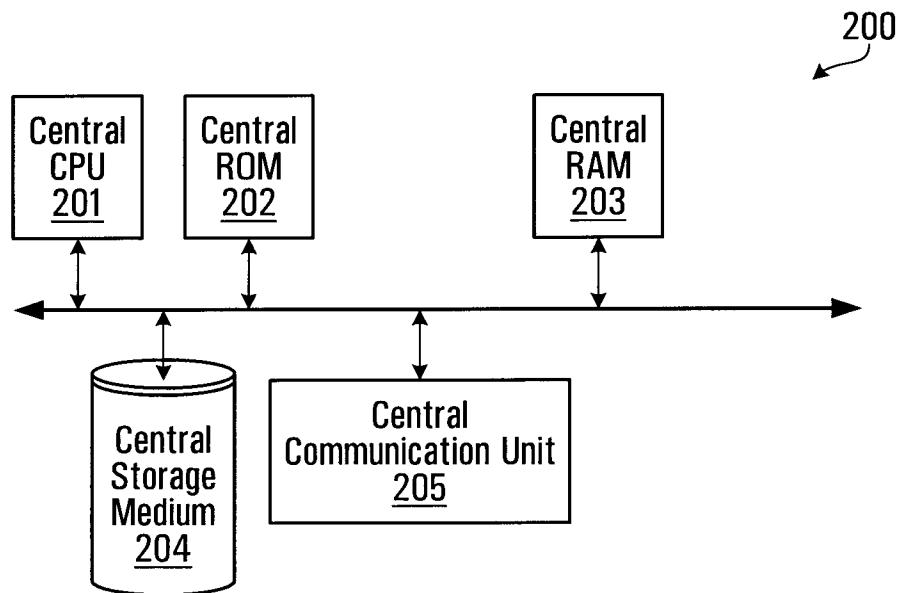
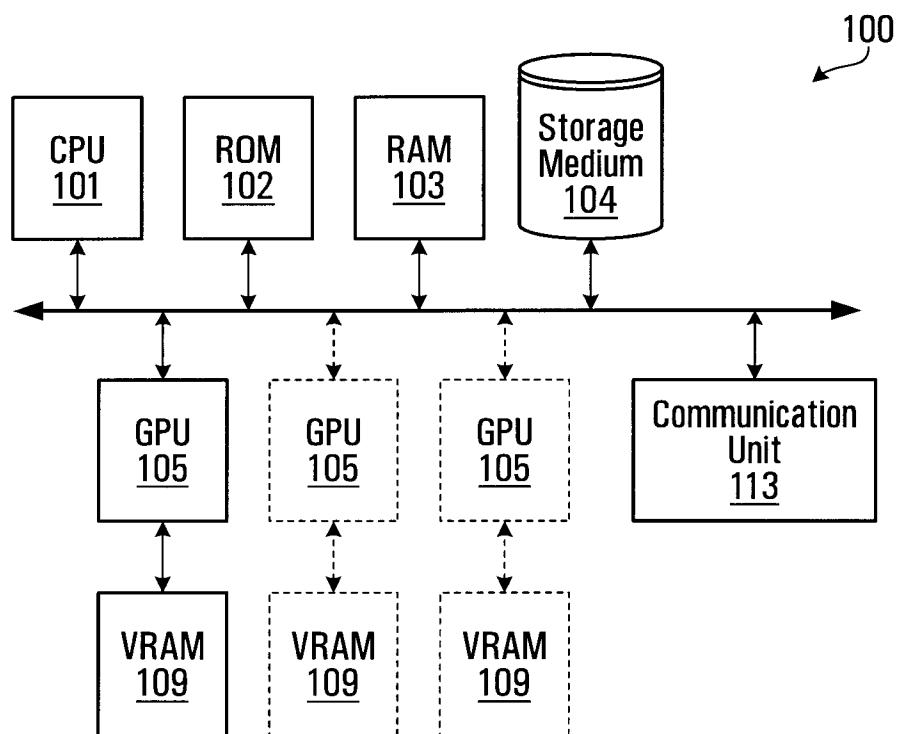
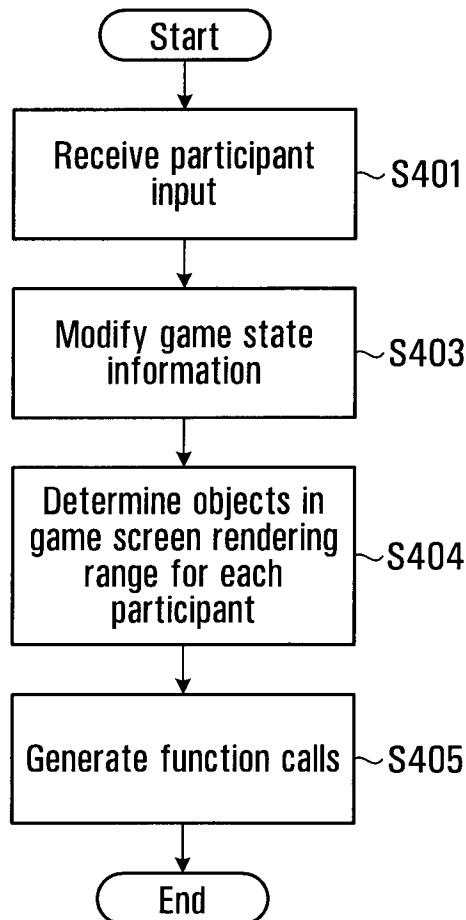


FIG. 1

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**FIG. 2****FIG. 3**

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**FIG. 4**

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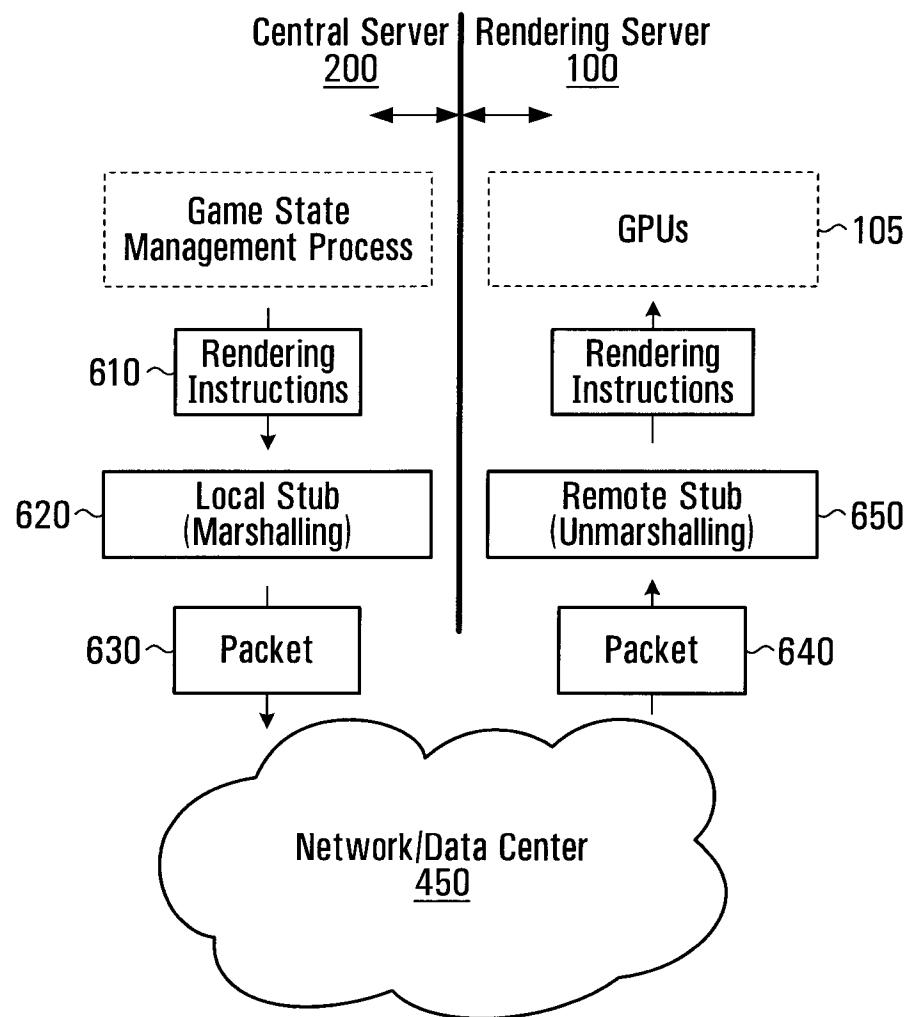
Client Device Identifier
Movement Information
Magnitude
Direction
Action Information
Rendering Range
Display Setting

FIG. 5A

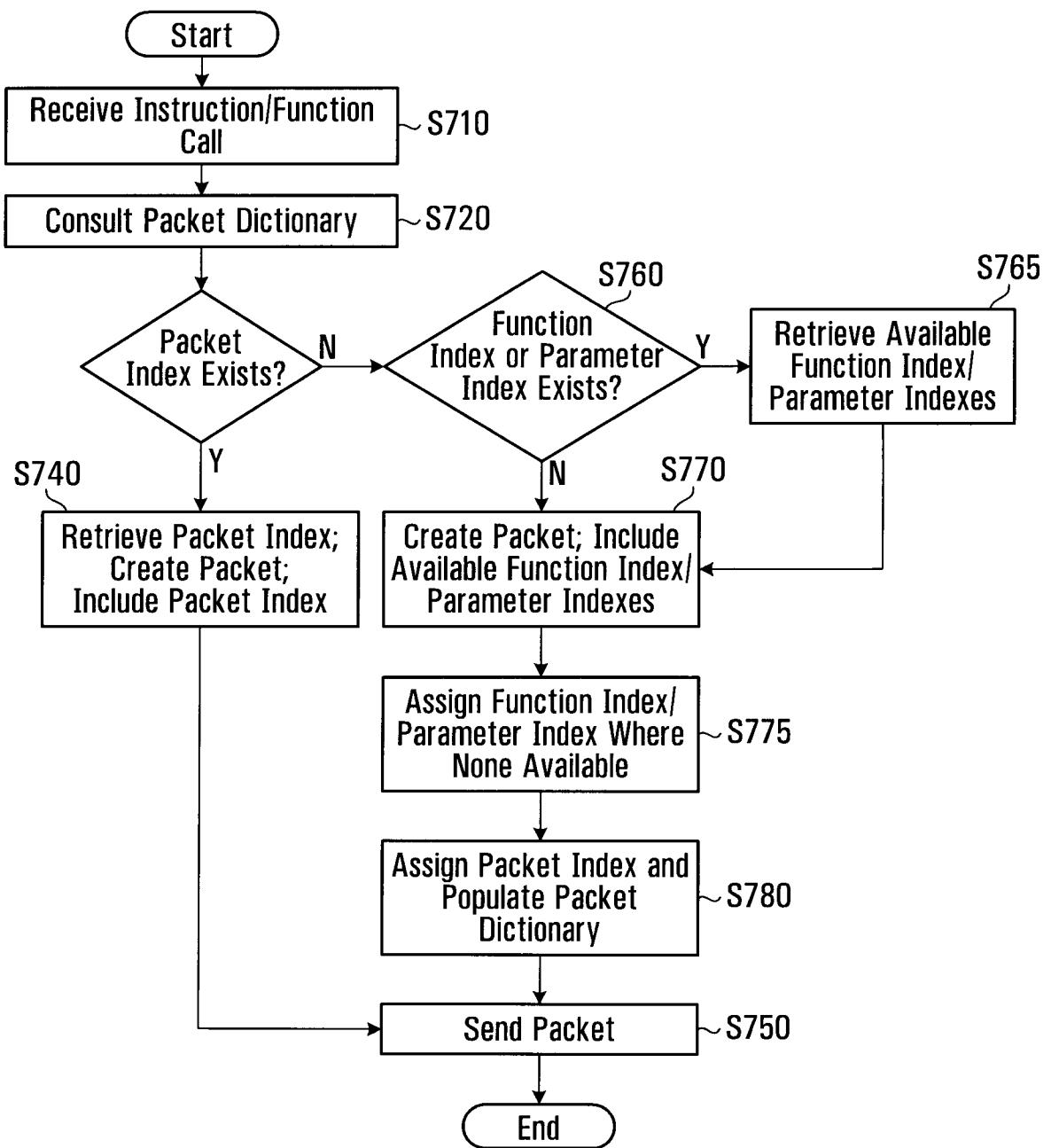
Rendering Object 1
Identification Information 1
Detailed Information 1
Model Data Identification Information 1
Texture Data Identification Information 1
Rendering Program Specifying Information 1
Data for Calculations Specifying Information 1
State Information 1
Rendering Object 2
Identification Information 2
:
:
:
State Information n
Rendering Range
Display Setting

FIG. 5B

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**FIG. 6**

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**FIG. 7A**

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790

Function Identifier	Function Index
...	...

792

Parameter	Parameter Index
...	...

794

Function Identifier	Parameter #1	Parameter #2	...	Parameter #N	Packet Index
...

Entry in
Packet
Dictionary

FIG. 7B

S796

Ordered Set of Parameters				Parameter Combination Index
Parameter #1	Parameter #2	...	Parameter #N	
...

FIG. 7C

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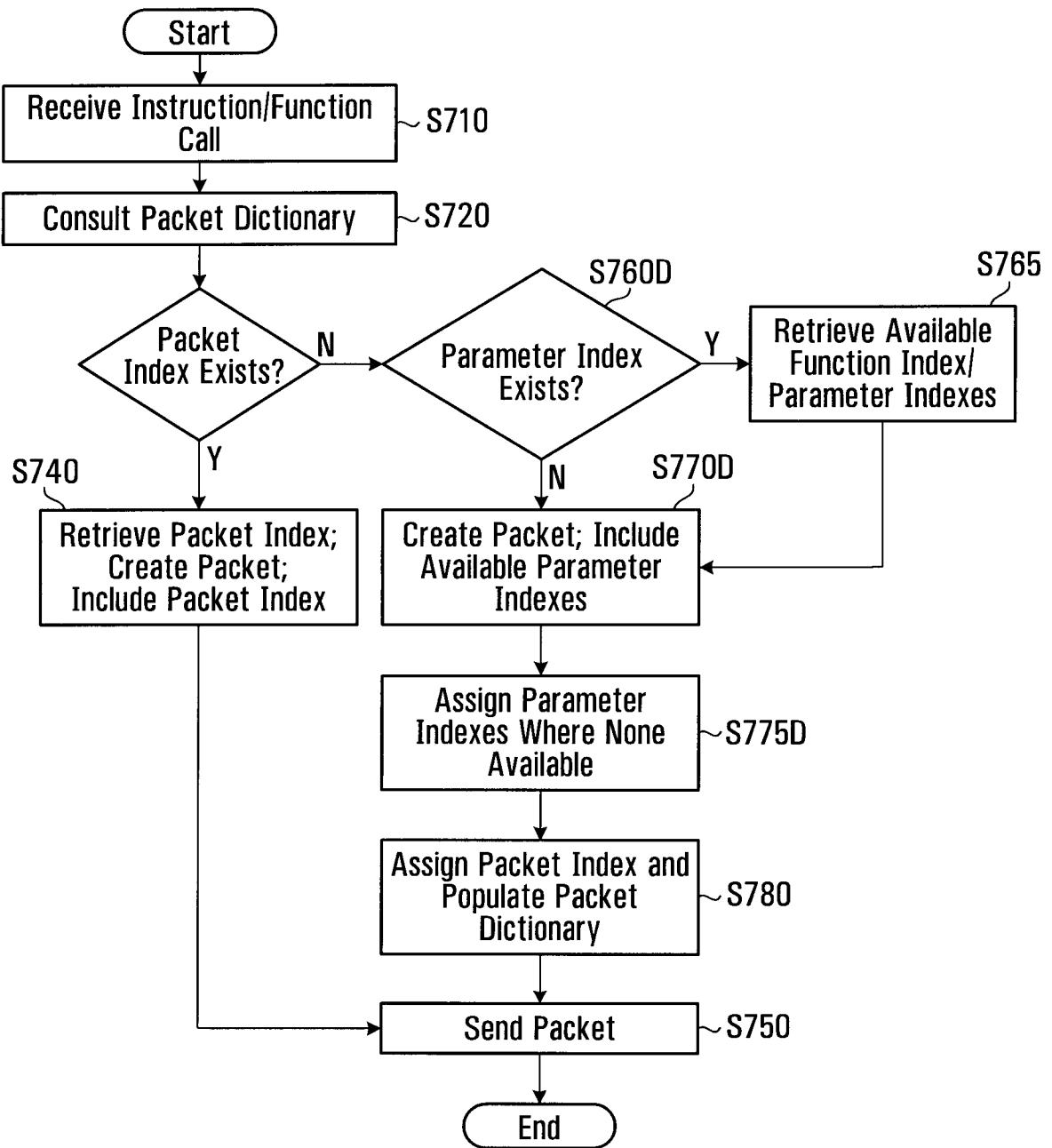


FIG. 7D

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790

Function Identifier	Function Index
...	...

792

Parameter	Parameter Index
...	...

794

Function Identifier	Parameter #1	Parameter #2	...	Parameter #N	Packet Index
→					
...

Entry in
Packet
Dictionary

FIG. 8A

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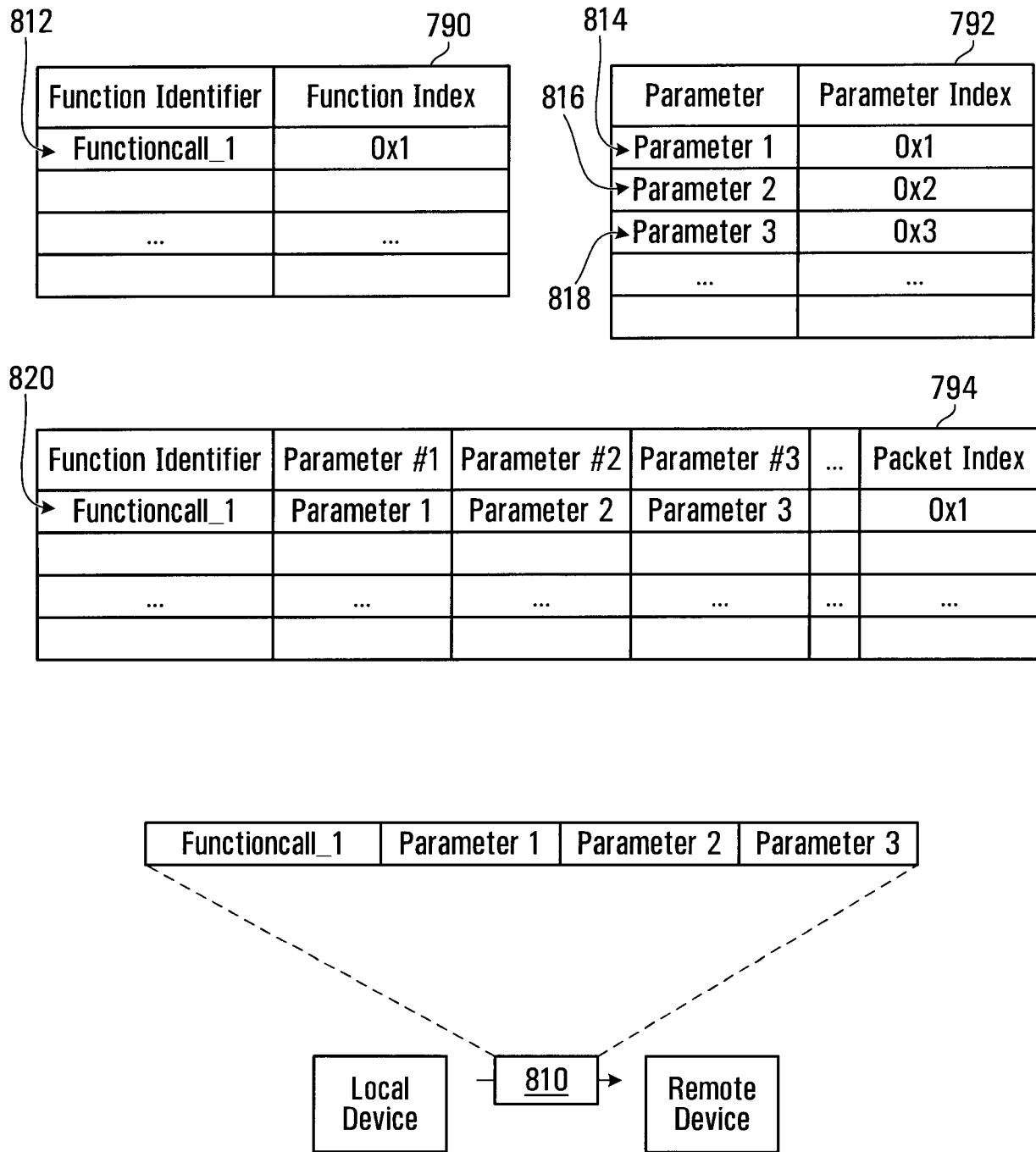


FIG. 8B

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790

Function Identifier	Function Index
Functioncall_1	0x1
→ Functioncall_2	0x2
...	...

832

834

Parameter	Parameter Index
Parameter 1	0x1
Parameter 2	0x2
Parameter 3	0x3
Parameter 4	0x4
...	...

792

794

Function Identifier	Parameter #1	Parameter #2	Parameter #3	...	Packet Index
Functioncall_1	Parameter 1	Parameter 2	Parameter 3		0x1
→ Functioncall_2	Parameter 3	Parameter 4			0x2
...

836

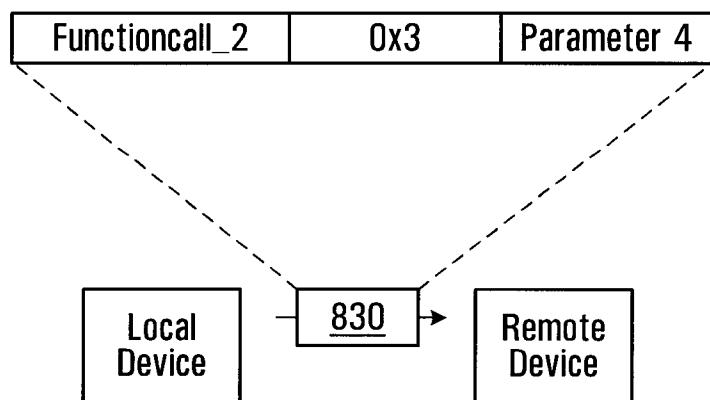


FIG. 8C

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790

Function Identifier	Function Index
Functioncall_1	0x1
→ Functioncall_2	0x2
...	...

832

792

Parameter	Parameter Index
Parameter 1	0x1
Parameter 2	0x2
Parameter 3	0x3
Parameter 4	0x4
...	...

834

794

Function Identifier	Parameter #1	Parameter #2	Parameter #3	...	Packet Index
Functioncall_1	Parameter 1	Parameter 2	Parameter 3		0x1
→ Functioncall_2	Parameter 3	Parameter 4			0x2
...

836

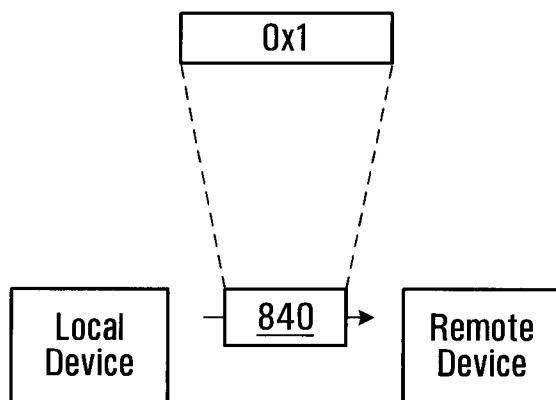


FIG. 8D

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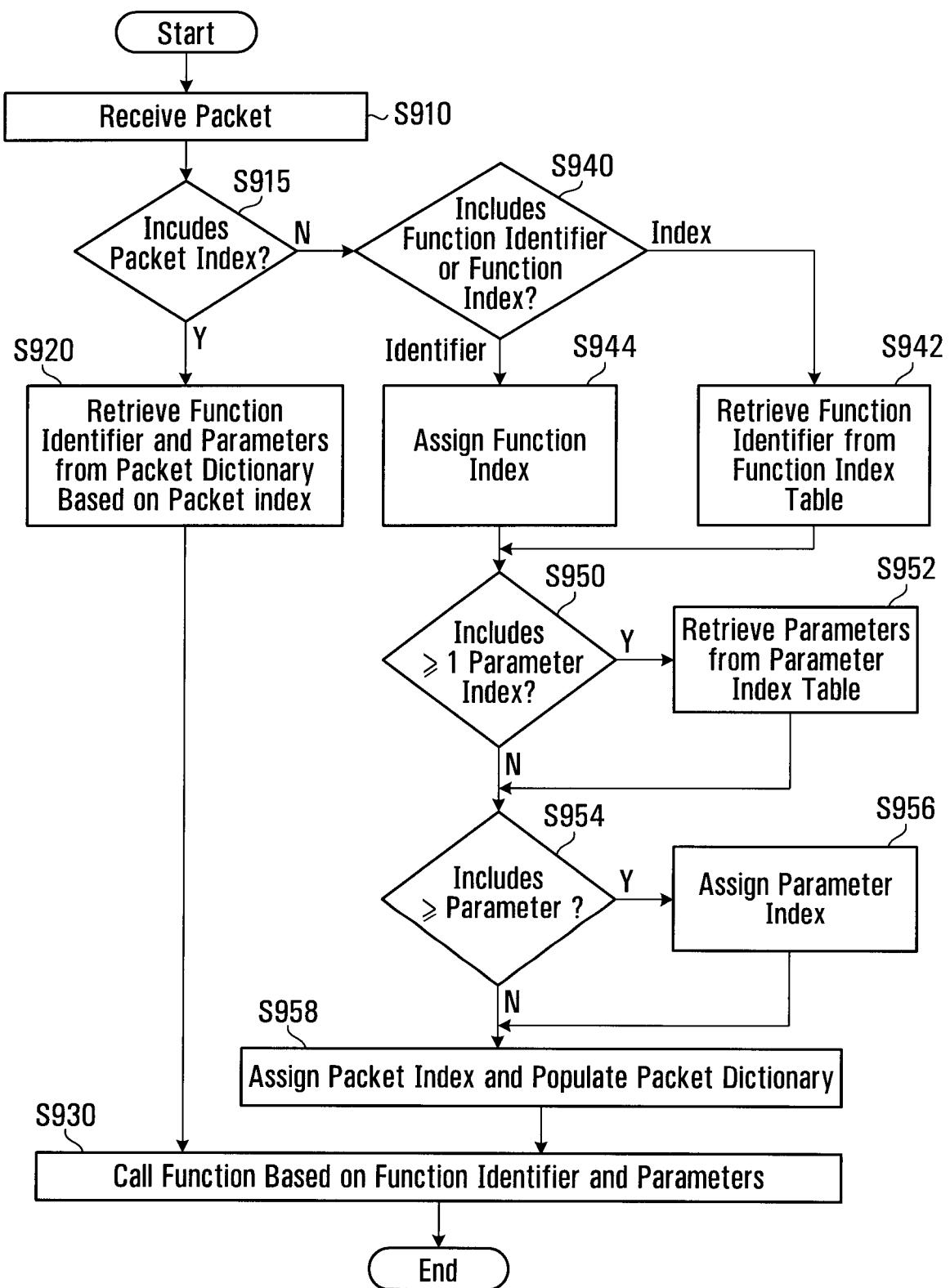


FIG. 9A

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990

Function Identifier	Function Index
...	...

992

Parameter	Parameter Index
...	...

994

Function Identifier	Parameter #1	Parameter #2	...	Parameter #N	Packet Index
→					
...

Entry in
Packet
Dictionary

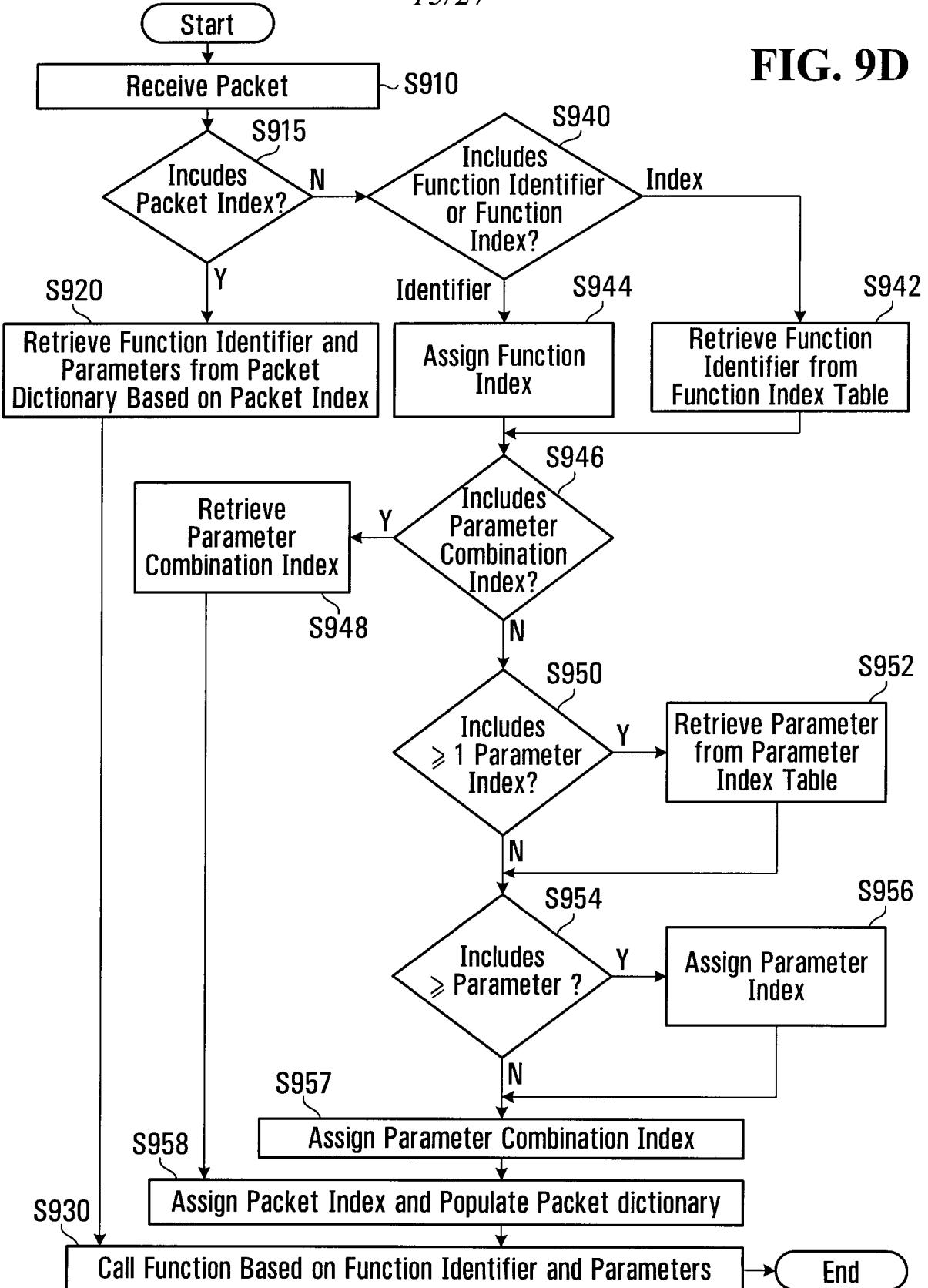
FIG. 9B

S996

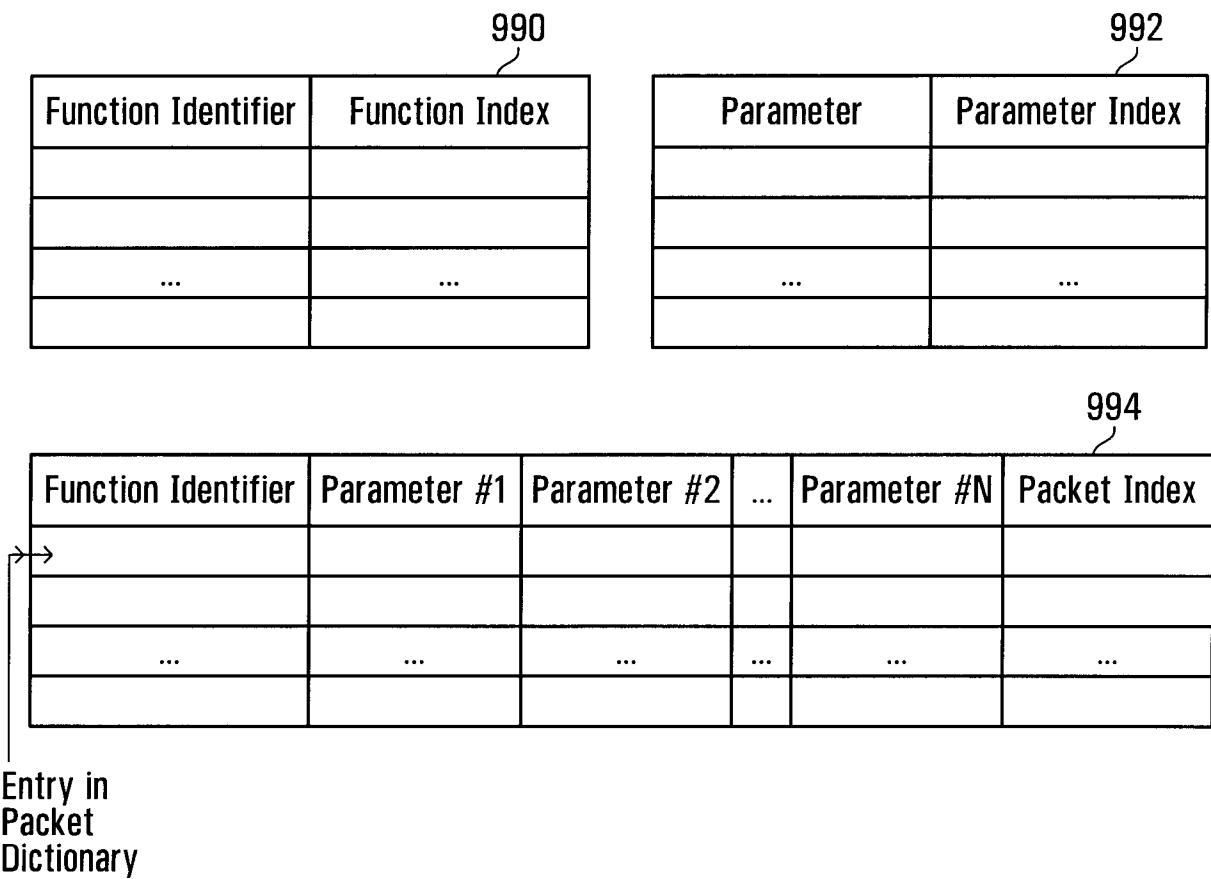
Ordered Set of Parameters					Parameter Combination Index
Parameter #1	Parameter #2	...	Parameter #N		
...	

FIG. 9C

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**FIG. 10A**

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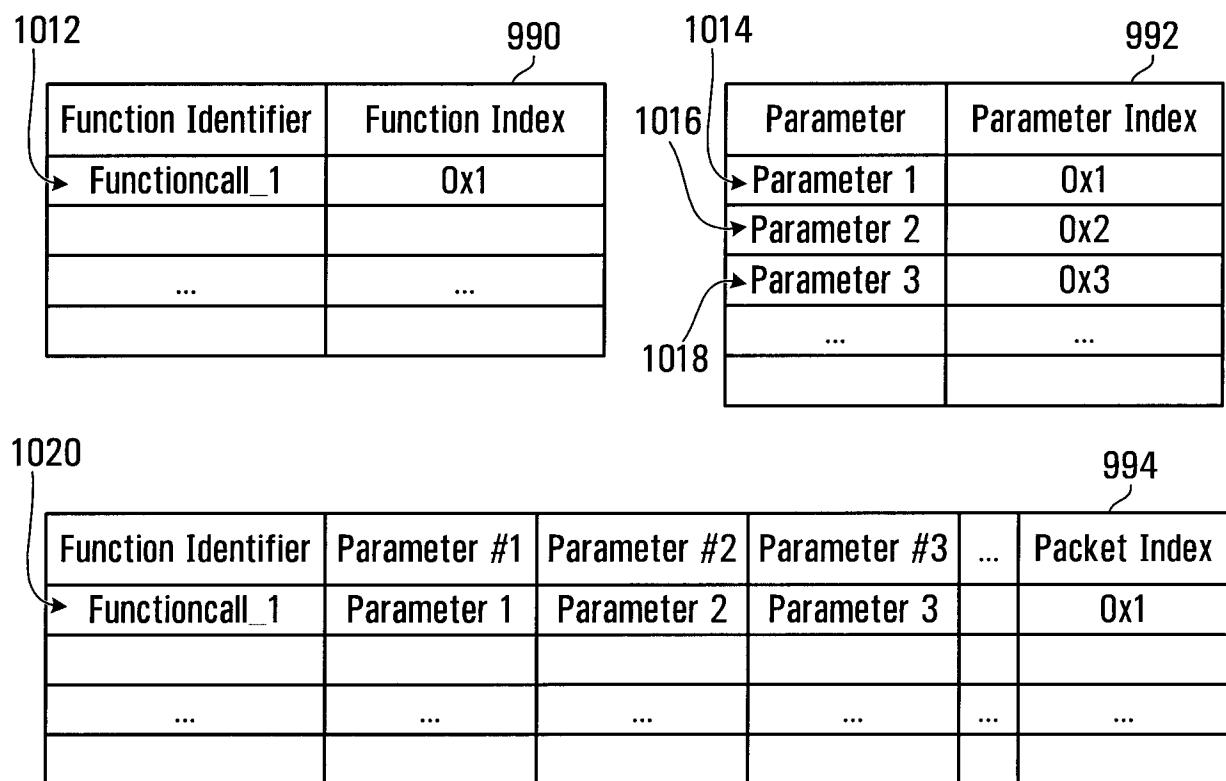


FIG. 10B

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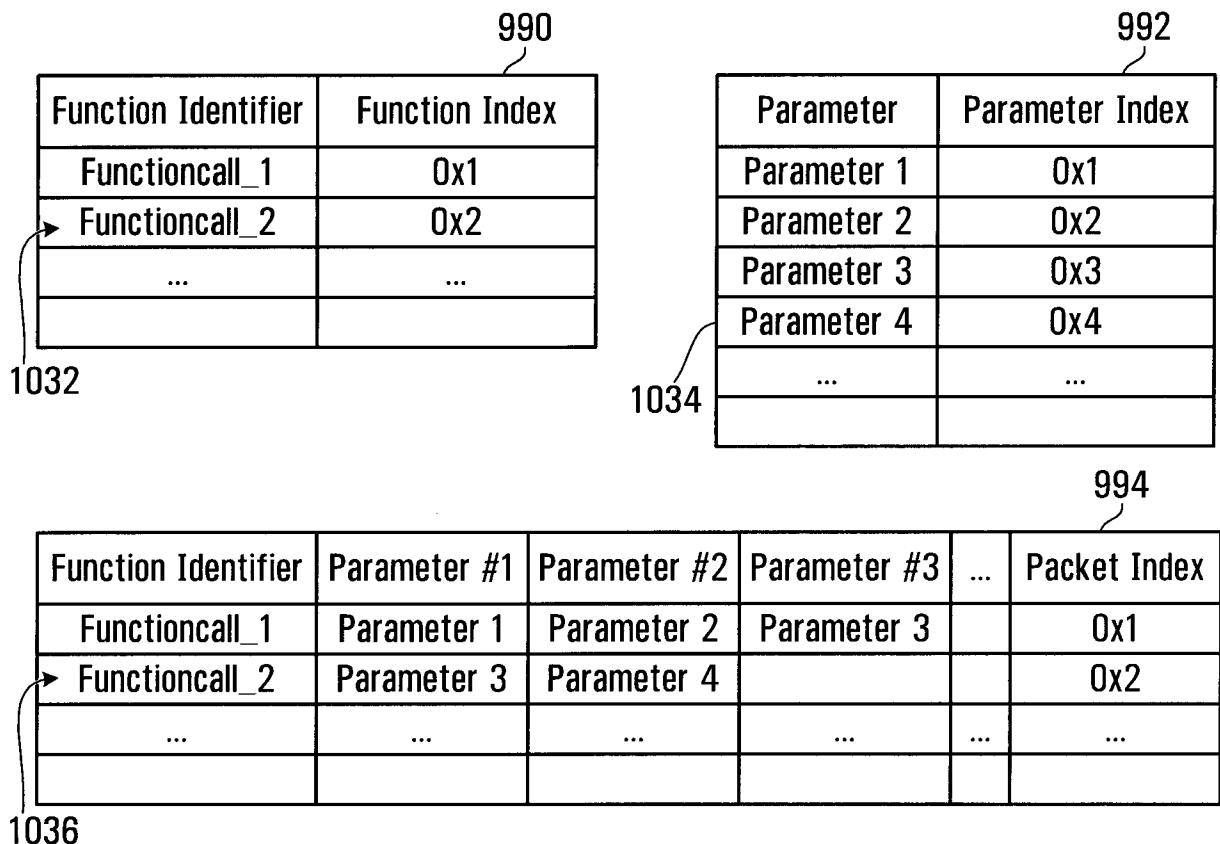


FIG. 10C

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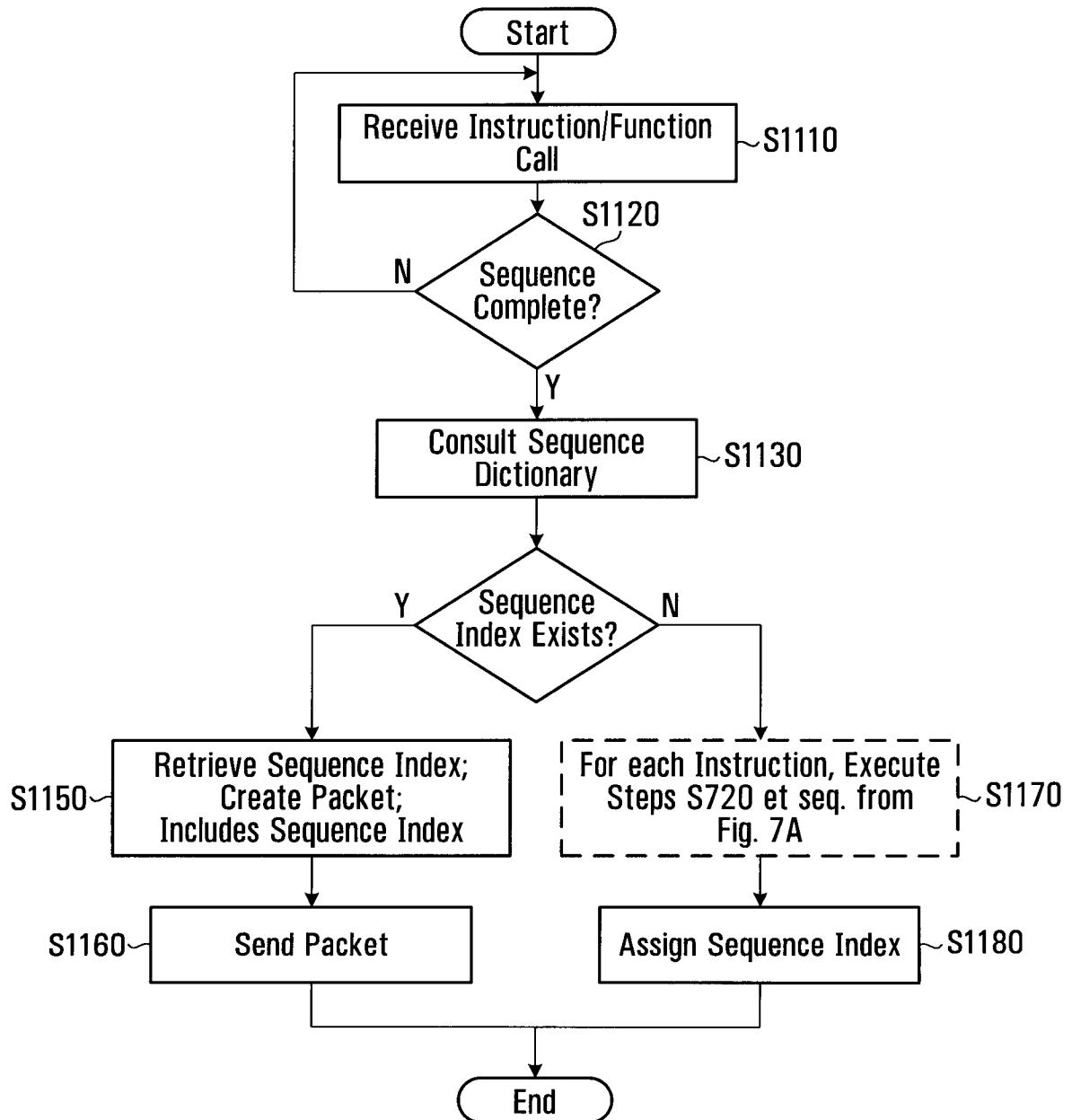


FIG. 11A

FIG. 11B

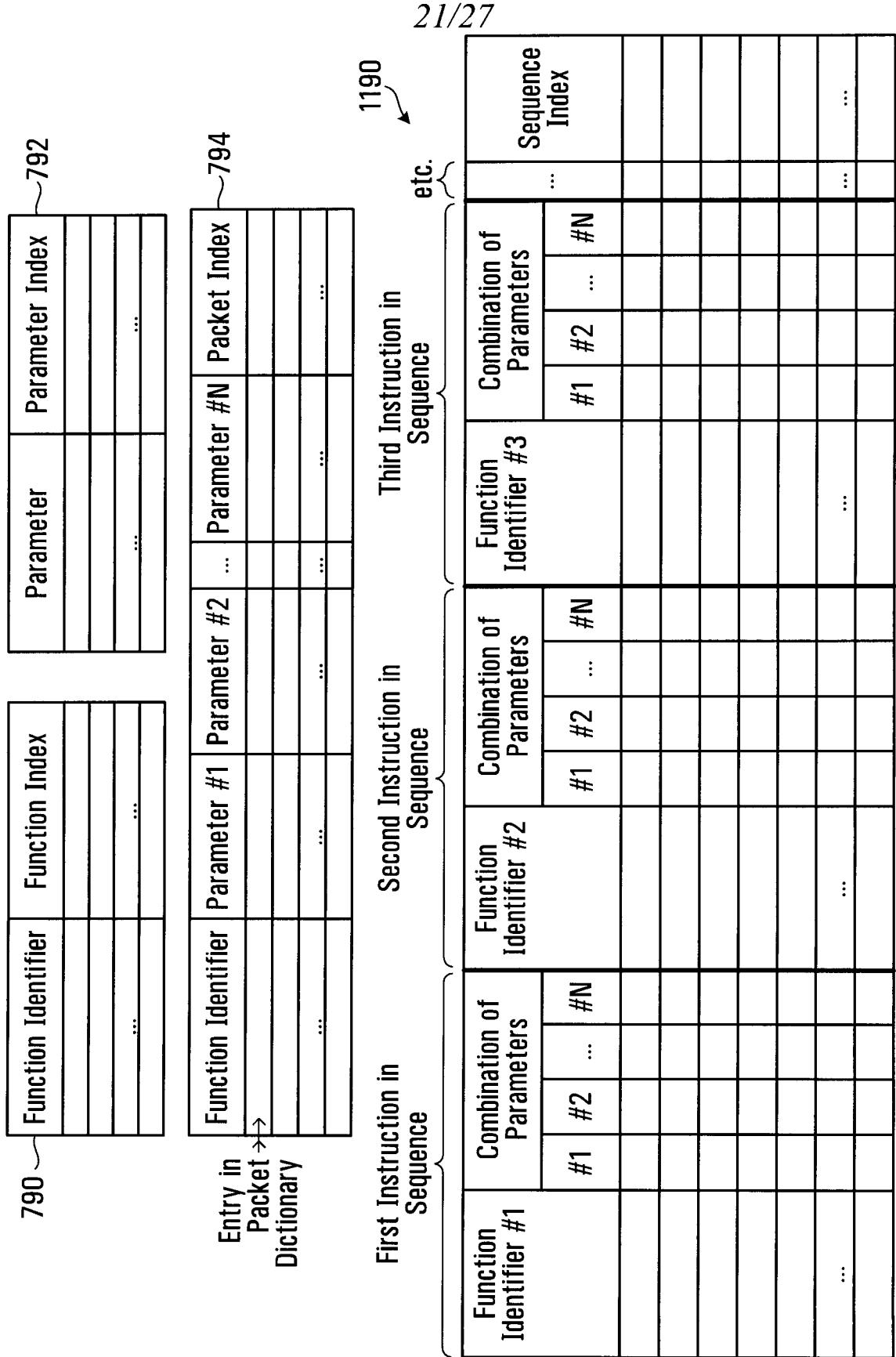
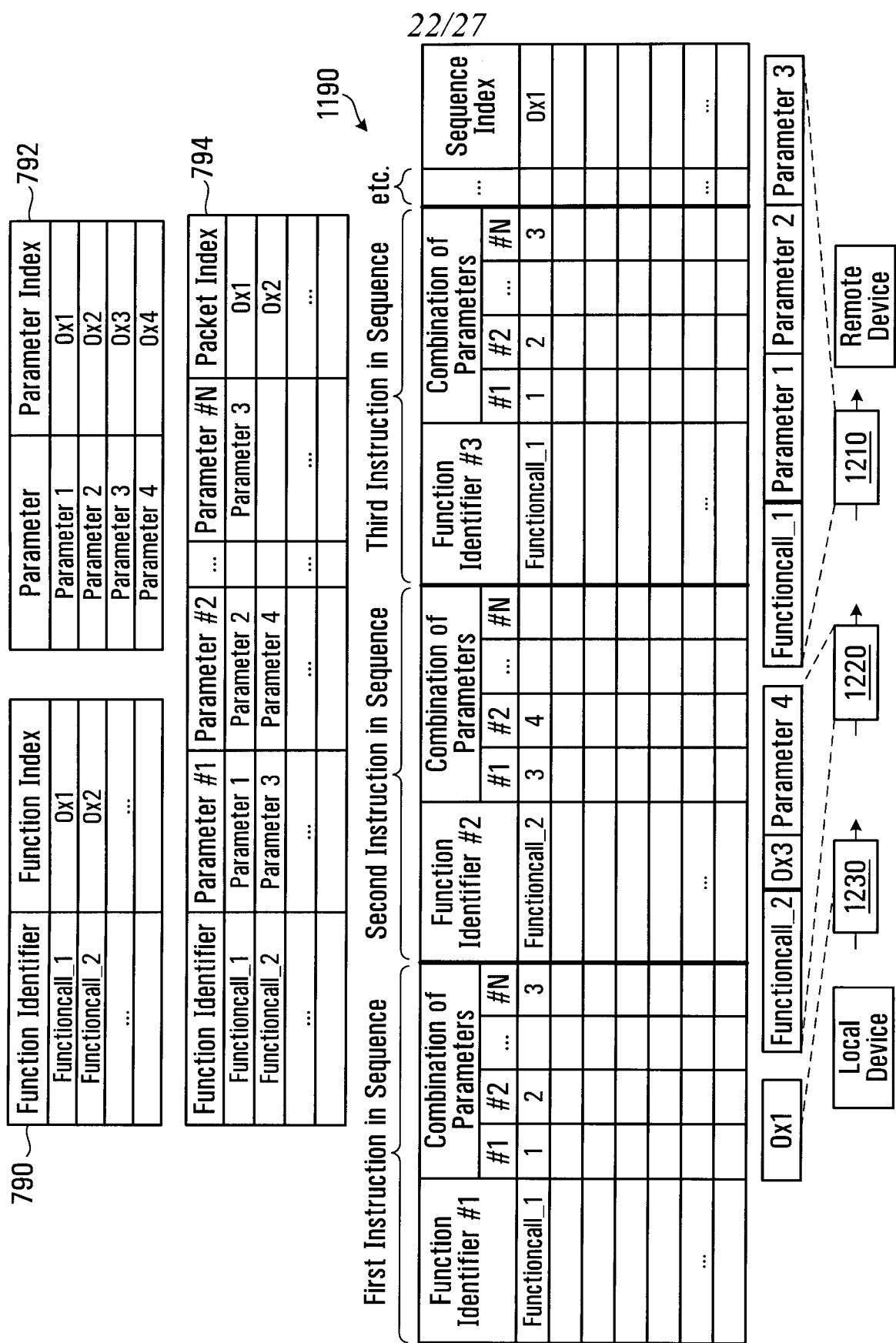
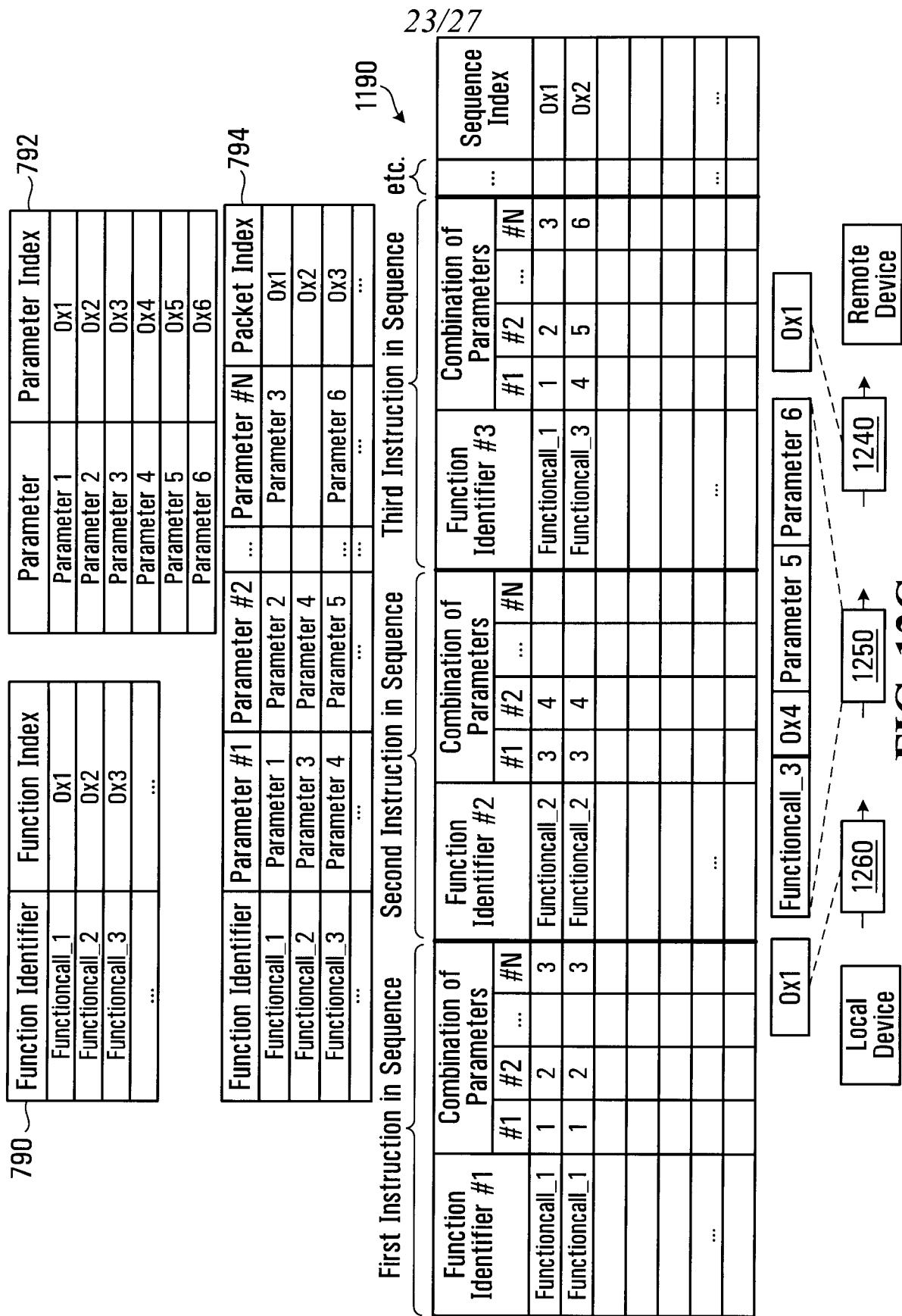


FIG. 12A





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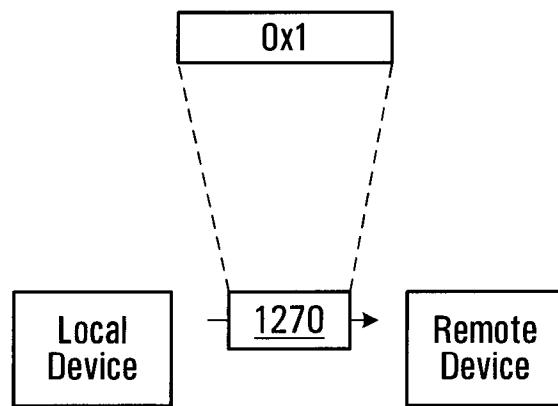


FIG. 13

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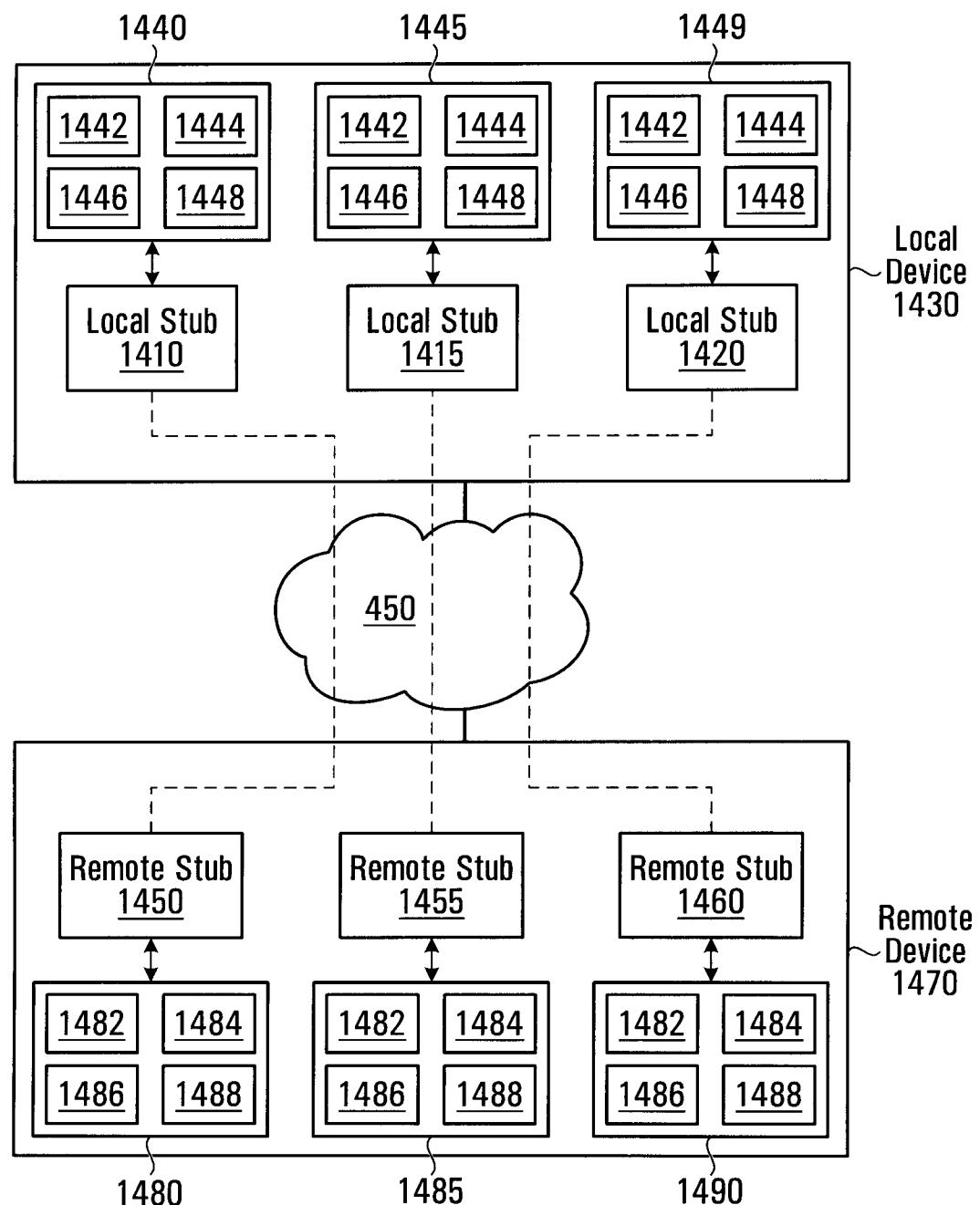
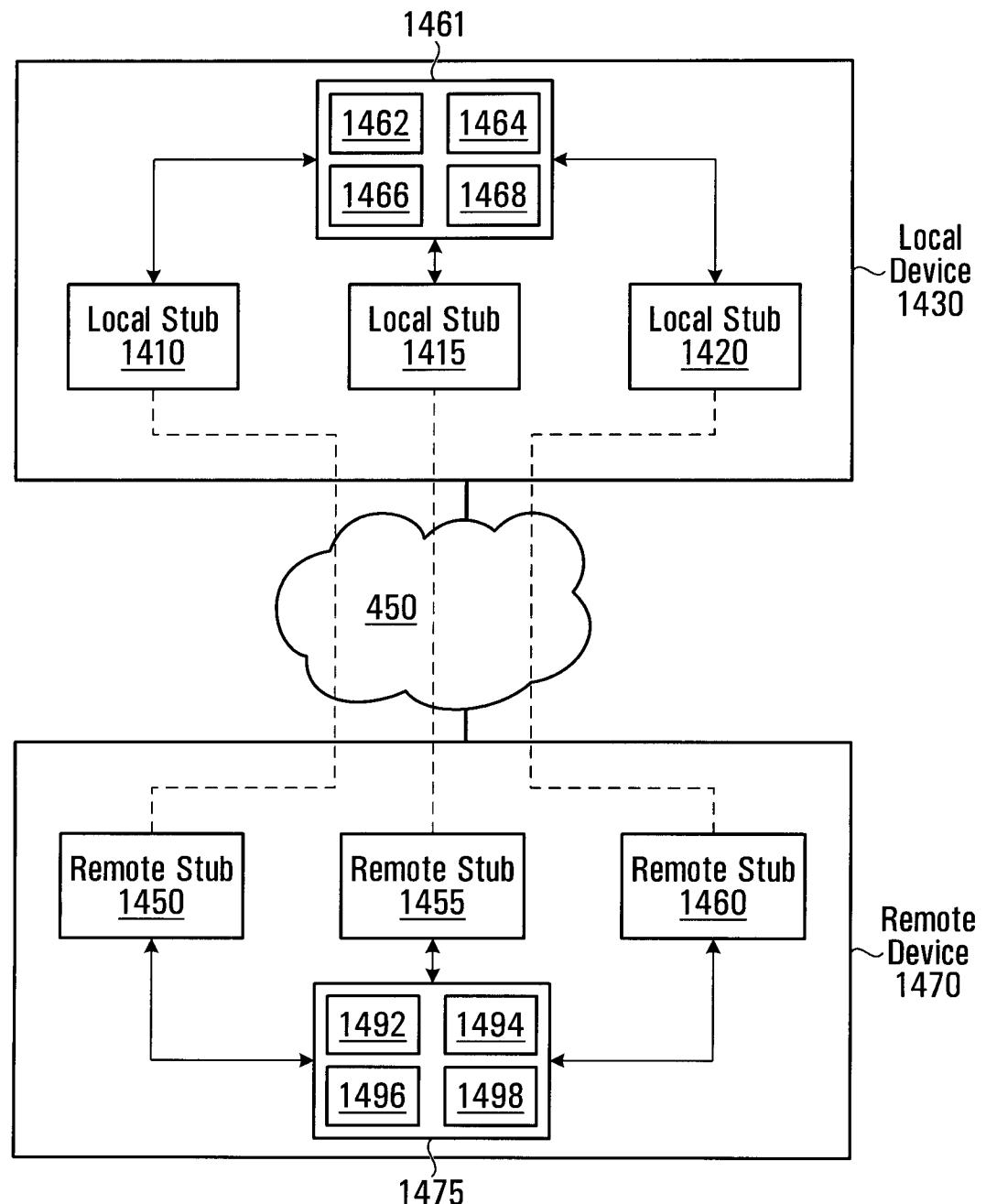


FIG. 14A

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**FIG. 14B**

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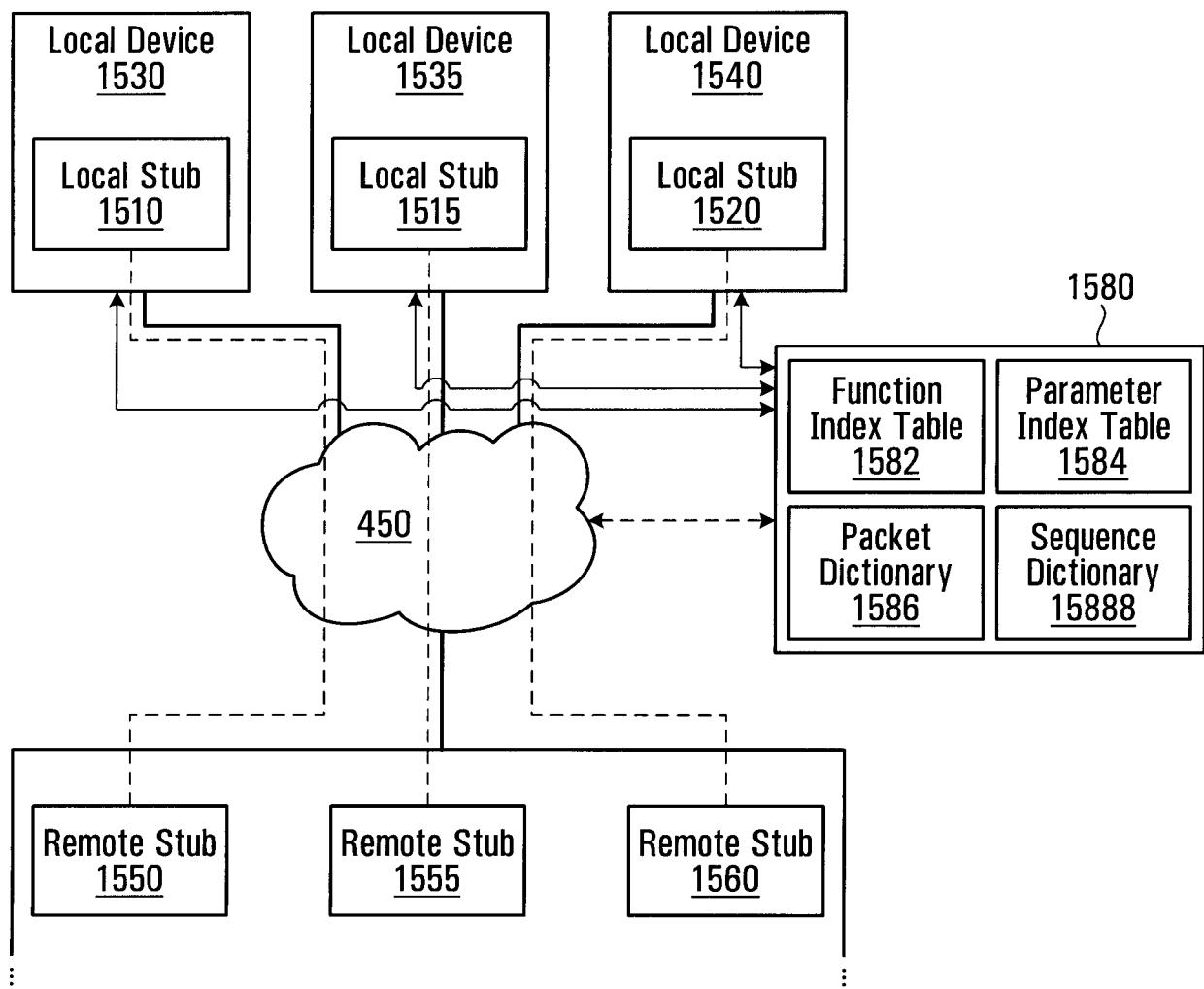


FIG. 15

DECLARATION OF NON-ESTABLISHMENT OF INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 17(2)(a), Rules 13ter.1(c) and Rule 39)

Applicant's or agent's file reference 87704-17	IMPORTANT DECLARATION		Date of mailing (<i>day/month/year</i>) 30 October 2013 (30-10-2013)
International application No. PCT/IB2013/001045	International filing date (<i>day/month/year</i>) 15 April 2013 (15-04-2013)	(Earliest) Priority date (<i>day/month/year</i>) 29 June 2012 (29-06-2012)	
International Patent Classification (IPC) or both national classification and IPC G06F9/54			
Applicant KABUSHIKI KAISHA SQUARE ENIX HOLDINGS (ALSO...)			

This International Searching Authority hereby declares, according to Article 17(2)(a), that **no international search report will be established** on the international application for the reasons indicated below

1. The subject matter of the international application relates to:
 - a. scientific theories
 - b. mathematical theories
 - c. plant varieties
 - d. animal varieties
 - e. essentially biological processes for the production of plants and animals, other than microbiological processes and the products of such processes
 - f. schemes, rules or methods of doing business
 - g. schemes, rules or methods of performing purely mental acts
 - h. schemes, rules or methods of playing games
 - i. methods for treatment of the human body by surgery or therapy
 - j. methods for treatment of the animal body by surgery or therapy
 - k. diagnostic methods practised on the human or animal body
 - l. mere presentations of information
 - m. computer programs for which this International Searching Authority is not equipped to search prior art
2. The failure of the following parts of the international application to comply with prescribed requirements prevents a meaningful search from being carried out:

the description the claims the drawings
3. A meaningful search could not be carried out without the sequence listing; the applicant did not, within the prescribed time limit:
 - furnish a sequence listing on paper complying with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions, and such listing was not available to the International Searching Authority in a form and manner acceptable to it.
 - furnish a sequence listing in electronic form complying with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions, and such listing was not available to the International Searching Authority in a form and manner acceptable to it.
 - pay the required late furnishing fee for the furnishing of a sequence listing in response to an invitation under Rule 13ter.1(a) or (b).
4. Further comments:

Name and mailing address of the International Searching Authority  European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL-2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040 Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer SOGNO-PABIS, Elzbieta Tel: +31 (0)70 340-2414
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FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 203

The present application contains 93 claims, of which 14 are independent and the broadness thereof renders unreasonable to find a clear distinction between the independent claims, because of overlapping scope. There are so many claims, and they are drafted in such a way that the claims as a whole are not in compliance with the provisions of clarity and conciseness of Article 6 PCT, as it is particularly burdensome for a skilled person to establish the subject-matter for which protection is sought.

In particular, the description does not help in finding potential matter which might be reasonably expected to form the subject of the claims later in the procedure, even when reading it in combination with the claims and with synthetic propensity.

The non-compliance with the substantive provisions is to such an extent that a meaningful search of the whole claimed subject-matter could not be carried out (Article 17(2) PCT and PCT Guidelines 9.30).

There being no reasonable basis in the application that clearly indicates the subject-matter which might be expected to form the subject of the claims later in the procedure, no search at all was deemed possible.

The applicant's attention is drawn to the fact that claims relating to inventions in respect of which no international search report has been established need not be the subject of an international preliminary examination (Rule 66.1(e) PCT). The applicant is advised that the EPO policy when acting as an International Preliminary Examining Authority is normally not to carry out a preliminary examination on matter which has not been searched. This is the case irrespective of whether or not the claims are amended following receipt of the search report or during any Chapter II procedure. If the application proceeds into the regional phase before the EPO, the applicant is reminded that a search may be carried out during examination before the EPO (see EPO Guidelines C-IV, 7.2), should the problems which led to the Article 17(2) declaration be overcome.