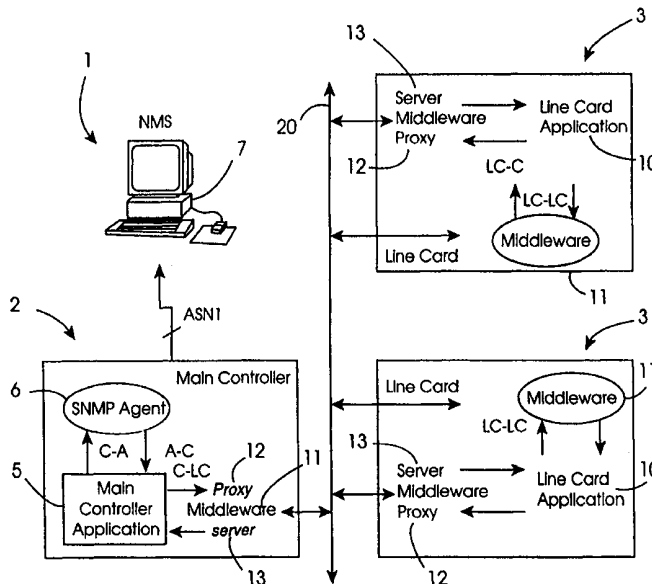




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(54) Title: A TELECOMMUNICATION CONTROLLER MESSAGING SYSTEM



(57) Abstract

In a telecommunication controller (1), a messaging system allows real time communication between sub-systems such as a main controller (2) and line cards (3). Requesting applications (5) create a proxy (12) which controls the function call via a middleware engine (11) in each of the sub-systems (2, 3). A resource middleware engine (11) calls a server (13) which in turn controls performance of the function on the resource (10). The proxies (12) are transient. The servers (13) are static but may be easily added or deleted according to resource changes. Applications (5) and resources (10) are decoupled from the messaging system.

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“A TELECOMMUNICATION CONTROLLER MESSAGING SYSTEM”

INTRODUCTION

5 Field of the Invention

The invention relates to a messaging system for a telecommunication controller operating in real time and which comprises multiple distributed sub-systems such as a main controller and multiple line cards. The invention relates particularly to such systems which include a number of circuits having embedded software.

Prior Art Discussion

Heretofore, the approach for messaging within such systems has been to provide dedicated communication protocols tied into hardware buses and interface circuits in order to achieve real time performance. Such an approach has been satisfactory for many situations.

However, in recent years there has been a growing requirement for telecommunication controllers to have inherent flexibility to allow modification. Such modification is required both to change the functionality of the system and also to allow growth to cater for ever-increasing transaction volumes. Messaging protocols which are bound to the higher-level and lower-level functionality tend to inhibit the ability to modify telecommunication controllers.

25

Objects of the Invention

It is an object of the invention to provide a messaging system for a telecommunication controller which allows simple modification of resources which

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perform telecommunication functions and of applications which control and request the functions.

A development of this object is to decouple the messaging system from the applications and resources so that they may be modified independently of the
5 messaging system.

Another object is to achieve this flexibility without affecting response time so that real time performance is still achieved.

10 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention provides a messaging system in a telecommunication controller comprising a plurality of distributed sub-systems, the messaging system comprising:-

15 means in a requesting sub-system for creating a proxy to control messaging for a function to be carried out in real time by a resource on a resource sub-system, the function being requested by an application on the requesting sub-system;

20 a middleware engine in the requesting sub-system comprising means for acting in response to the proxy in real time to generate a function request message and to transmit said message to the resource sub-system;

25 a middleware engine in the resource sub-system comprising means for reading the message, determining a server associated with the function, and activating the server;

means in the server for controlling performance of the function by the resource;

30

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means in the resource middleware engine for passing control back to the proxy when the function is complete; and

5 means in the requesting sub-system for terminating the proxy when the requesting application is satisfied.

Preferably, each middleware engine comprises means for operating as a requesting or as a resource middleware engine whereby function requests are bi-directional.

10 In one embodiment, the sub-systems comprise a main system controller and a plurality of line cards.

In another embodiment, the requesting application comprises means for creating the proxy and for terminating the proxy.

15 In one embodiment, the proxy is an instance of a proxy object class.

Preferably, the server is an instance of a server object class.

20 In one embodiment, the server is stored in non-volatile memory.

In another embodiment, the requesting middleware engine is coupled to the application only via the proxy, whereby the application may be created or modified independently of the middleware engine.

25 In a further embodiment, the resource middleware engine is coupled to the resource only via the server, whereby the resource may be created or modified independently of the middleware engine.

Preferably, the server registers automatically with the resource middleware engine.

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In a further embodiment, the servers for both active and redundant resources register with the resource middleware engine to provide automatic redundancy.

5 Preferably, the requesting application comprises means for creating the proxy by presenting a logical or a physical key for the resource and the function.

In one embodiment, the message includes the key function parameter arguments.

10 In a further embodiment, the proxy controls one of a plurality of types of message transactions, including a synchronous type in which the function is invoked, a response is awaited and a return value is passed to the requesting application, and a synchronous type in which the function is invoked only.

15 In another embodiment, the proxy controls a deferred synchronous transaction in which a function is invoked, a reply is transmitted and an application retrieves the reply later.

In one embodiment the proxy initiates multiple re-tries upon failure of the requested function.

20 In another aspect, the invention provides a telecommunication system comprising a messaging system as claimed in any preceding claim.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

25 Brief Description of the Drawings

The invention will be more clearly understood from the following description of some embodiments thereof, given by way of example only with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:-

30

Fig. 1 is a diagrammatic representation of a telecommunication controller messaging system and interaction with applications and resources of the controller;

5 Figs. 2 to 5 inclusive are diagrams illustrating messaging system components; and

Figs. 6 to 18 inclusive are message flow diagrams illustrating operation of the messaging system.

10

Description of the Embodiments

Referring initially to Fig. 1, a messaging system in a controller 1 is initially briefly described. The controller 1 comprises a main controller 2 and line cards 3. The
15 main controller 2 comprises a main controller application 5 and a SNMP agent 6 interfacing with a management station 7. The main controller 2 also comprises a middleware engine 11 which interacts with the application 5 via proxies 12. The
20 middleware engine 11 communicates via a message handling layer and a physical layer indicated generally by the numeral 20 with corresponding middleware engines 11 in the line card 3. The middleware engine 11 of each line card 3 is coupled to a line card application 10 via servers 13. In addition, there is an IDL interface between the line card application 10 and the middleware engine 11 to allow line card to line card communication. In this interface, the proxies and the servers are not explicitly
illustrated, for clarity

25

The servers 13 are registered in a generic fashion to the middleware engine, and not by a form of hard coding. This ensures that the middleware engine does not need modification on creation of additional servers.

The controller centric IDL interfaces involve use of a middleware engine 11 in a requesting sub-system and a middleware engine 11 in a resource sub-system. Each middleware engine 11 includes functionality to provide bi-directional function calls. However, for the purposes of this description, the terms "requesting middleware engine" and "resource middleware engine" are used to indicate the roles they are playing for a particular function call.

The messaging system comprises the middleware engine 11 in each of the sub-systems 2 and 3, the server objects 13 (which are stored in non-volatile memory), and functionality in applications for creating proxies. The proxies and the servers are both instances of object classes. However, the proxies are transient in nature as they exist only during a particular function call, while the servers are permanent as they are associated with resources rather than particular function calls.

Referring again to Fig. 1, as the controller application 5 requests a function on a resource of a remote line card 3, a proxy is created by the application. The proxy is an instance of a proxy object class. The proxy is created by presenting a logical or a physical key which identifies the server. The proxy takes over control of the function call and requests a message to be sent via the middleware engine 11 to the remote line card 3 which supports the requested services. The resource middleware engine determines the server 13 to be called and passes the operation on to that server. The server 13 then calls the real resource functionality by calling the local function. On completion, the server 13 returns data to the invoking proxy, which in turn returns control to the requesting application. When the application has completed the operation, the proxy is terminated.

Many advantages will be apparent from this construction of messaging system. One such advantage is the fact that there is very little memory or processing overhead in the requesting sub-system because the proxies are transient and exist only during the function call. This helps to achieve real time performance in an embedded

environment, traditionally limited by memory and processing power. Another major advantage is the fact that the requesting application is only coupled to the middleware engine via the proxies. The application creates the proxy and the proxy then takes over control by directing the middleware engine to transmit the function request message. Therefore, the requesting applications may be modified, deleted or added independently of the middleware engine. Likewise, the resource middleware engine is only coupled to the resources via the server objects 13. The server objects 13 automatically register with the middleware engine. Therefore, the resources may be modified, added or deleted independently of the resource middleware engine.

10 The requesting application does not need to know what redundancy is provided and which is the currently active resource. This level of functionality is achieved automatically by virtue of the proxy-creating key identifying a logical or physical address, and multi-casting of the message by the middleware engine to all line cards.

15 The requesting application only needs to identify a resource key to create the proxy. This may be a logical key for logical resources. An example of a situation in which logical keys are used is generation of a local alarm in a line card. A physical key would be used, for example, to set a performance threshold for a particular line card.

20 The proxy avoids message handling overhead in the requesting application by automatically controlling the function call and performing actions such as automatically re-trying the call if failures arise.

25 Three types of transactions may be involved for a function call. These are synchronous, asynchronous, and deferred synchronous. For a synchronous transaction, the function is invoked, the server waits until the function has been performed, and the server transmits a return value to the requesting proxy. For an asynchronous transaction, the function is invoked only and no further action arises. For a deferred synchronous transaction, the function is invoked by the application

30 creating the proxy and the middleware returning immediately to the application.

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The application can later query the middleware response, for example, upon expiry of a timer.

Referring now to Figs. 2 to 5, the mechanisms behind the messaging system are described in more detail. The proxy 12 comprises a proxy object 12(a) and a meta level architecture 12(b). The messaging engine 11 is connected to a lower level message handling system (MHS) 30, in turn connected to a physical layer 31 for message transfer. The server 13 comprises an object adapter 13(a), a meta level 13(b), and an object 13 (c). In Fig. 2, the requesting and resource middleware engines 11 are combined in the one box for illustrative purposes.

As shown in Fig. 3, the proxy comprises operation, interface and generic components 40, 41 and 42 at the meta level.

As shown in Fig. 4, the server 13 comprises void-related components 50, operation-related components 51 and 52, and interface-related components 53 and 54.

Fig. 5 is a middleware static model associated with the dynamic model sequence diagrams of Figs. 6 to 18. Referring now to Figs. 6 to 18, examples of function calls are illustrated. These demonstrate the synchronous, asynchronous, and deferred synchronous transaction types.

Fig. 6 shows a synchronous call for the method foo, which is a synchronous operation. The proxy does not return until the server completes and returns a result to the proxy. The sequence is as follows.

- The requesting application instructs the system 1 to create a proxy X.
- The client calls the function foo on the proxy X.

- 9 -

- The proxy X packages the request as a message and transmits it through to the object adapter which interprets the message and calls function foo on the server X using the server object.
- 5 - The return value of foo is passed back to the object adapter which sends the result to the proxy X as a message.
- The proxy X interprets the message and returns the result as the return value from function foo.

10

A deferred synchronous call may also be made. For example the client may invoke the method longfoo on server X without waiting for the remote server to execute and return a reply. This allows the client to perform other tasks in the interim, checking periodically in a non-waiting mode for a reply.

15

As shown in Fig. 7, the client creates a ProxyOperationOn proxy, specifying that it is on the operation longfoo. The client calls the method sendDeferred, passing it the required parameters, if any. This method packages the request as a message and transmits it through to the object adapter, stores the handle internally, and returns to the client. The client calls pollResponse on the ProxyOperationOn object. This in turn calls isReplyAvailable on the middleware engine, but since no reply is available yet, this returns false. The object adapter interprets the message and calls the function longfoo on the server X. The result of longfoo is passed back to the object adapter which sends the result to the proxy X via a message. The client calls pollResponse on the ProxyOperationOn object, this time returning true. The response is then retrieved and interpreted by the client.

20

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One way requests are also handled by the system. The method shortfoo is a one way operation. This method is called on the proxy X as shown in Fig. 8. The proxy X packages the request as before and transmits it through to the object adapter. The

- 10 -

function shortfoo on the proxy X returns immediately, the object adapter interprets the message and calls the function shortfoo on the server X. The object adapter does not send a reply as it knows that the method is one way.

5 Fig. 9 shows the situation in which a message is not sent from the message layer. In this case the proxy clears the proxy's exception object. After attempting to send the message failure is encountered, upon which the failure is passed back to the proxy. The proxy interprets this as SendFail and sets the exception object. The proxy method returns a reply, and the client checks the proxy's exception object and detects
10 the exception, and handles it in the appropriate manner.

The system also handles situation where a message is sent but not received as shown in Fig. 10. In this case, after the operation executes and returns true the message is never received at the destination. The proxy awaits a response and times out. This is interpreted as a time-out and the exception object is set. This allows the client to
15 detect the exception and handle it as appropriate.

Fig. 11 illustrates the situation in which a message is sent and received, but the client times-out while waiting. Such a scenario may arise if the duration of a remote operation is unpredictable, or if the remote server is busy. Clearly, the deferred
20 synchronous mechanism should be used if it is anticipated that a time-out may arise. As shown in Fig. 11, while the object adapter calls longfoo on server X the proxy has executed a getReplyMsg to retrieve the reply from the server but times out waiting for a reply. The proxy sets the exception object with a timeout and the method returns. The client checks the proxy's exception object 11, detects the exception, and
25 handles it. Later, longfoo has completed and returns a reply indicating successful completion, but the message is discarded by the messaging layer.

Referring now to Fig. 12, a situation is shown in which the target operation is not recognised. In this case, the object adapter fails to interpret the message and a reply
30 indicating this is sent to the proxy. The proxy receives the Replymessage from the

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messaging layer, retrieves the exception information and sets the proxy's exception object. This allows the client to handle it.

Fig. 13 shows the sequence if the server operation fails. In this example the method
5 foo is called. When the failure occurs, the foo method retrieves the UserException
object and sets an error status, causing the object adapter to in turn send a message
indicating a user level failure. The proxy in turn sets the exception object 11, again
allowing the client to handle the failure.

10 As described above, the messaging system interacts between an application level and
a message delivery layer. Fig. 14 shows a situation in which a client determines a
card state. The client calls getCard on a Card proxy. The system operates as
described above until the getCard method is invoked on the server object supporting
the requested interface. This method calls a C function which returns the actual card
15 state to the object adapter. This is packaged as a method and sent back to the proxy
object, which interprets the message and returns the card state to the client.

Fig. 15 shows a sequence to determine the line status of a physical termination of a
DS1 card (physical transmission medium). In this case a DS1 proxy is used and the
20 object adapter locates the DS1 server object and calls its getLineStatus method. The
DS1 proxy subsequently receives the reply.

Fig. 16 illustrates a situation in which an alarm notification and loss of signal on DS1
is transmitted. This is a one-way operation. The IPC software detects a loss of
25 signal on the DS1 line, and retrieves the controller DS1 proxy and calls the
commsAlarmOccured method on the proxy, passing it the port identifier. After its
operation, the proxy returns without a reply. The commsAlarmOccured method is
invoked on the Controller DS1 server.

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The deferred synchronous method may be used for a software download, as shown in Fig. 17. The client creates a ProxyOperationOn object, specifying that it is on the operation startDownload. The client calls the method sendDeferred, passing it the required parameters. After the request is packaged as a message, the message handle
5 is stored by the ProxyOperationOn object and this in turn calls isReplyAvailable on the messaging layer. As no reply is available, this returns false. On the target card, the software download task has completed and the result is returned to the object adapter which sends a reply message back to the controller containing the result. The controller again calls pollResponse in the ProxyOperationOn object, this time
10 returning true. The controller then calls getResponse. This gets the returned message, checks for an error code in the reply, extracts the result and returns it to the controller. The controller checks the exception object to see if an exception occurred, but finds it clear, indicating that the result is valid.

15 Finally, referring to Fig. 18 initialisation of a new card is illustrated. An initialised method on the server object is called and it is passed a string through which it can identify itself to the object adapter. The card software processes the generic method initialise (nameID) on the server object. The server object stores the nameID and calls the registerInterface method on the object adapter, and passes itself to it.
20 makes the object adapter aware of its presence and allows requests to be passed to it. The object adapter indicates whether or not registration was successful.

It will be appreciated that the invention provides real time message transfer in a telecommunication controller in a manner in which allows flexibility in design and
25 modification of the controller itself. This, for example, allows addition of new functionality, and also expansion of resources to perform existing functionality.

The invention is not limited to the embodiments described but may be varied in construction and detail within the scope of the claims.

30

Claims

1. A messaging system in a telecommunication controller comprising a plurality of distributed sub-systems, the messaging system comprising:-
- 5
- means in a requesting sub-system for creating a proxy to control messaging for a function to be carried out in real time by a resource on a resource sub-system, the function being requested by an application on the requesting sub-system;
- 10
- a middleware engine in the requesting sub-system comprising means for acting in response to the proxy in real time to generate a function request message and to transmit said message to the resource sub-system;
- 15
- a middleware engine in the resource sub-system comprising means for reading the message, determining a server associated with the function, and activating the server;
- means in the server for controlling performance of the function by the
- 20
- resource;
- means in the resource middleware engine for passing control back to the proxy when the function is complete; and
- 25
- means in the requesting sub-system for terminating the proxy when the requesting application is satisfied.
2. A system as claimed in claim 1, wherein each middleware engine comprises
- 30
- means for operating as a requesting or as a resource middleware engine whereby function requests are bi-directional.

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3. A system as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the sub-systems comprise a main system controller and a plurality of line cards.
- 5 4. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the requesting application comprises means for creating the proxy and for terminating the proxy.
- 10 5. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the proxy is an instance of a proxy object class.
6. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the server is an instance of a server object class.
- 15 7. A system as claimed in claim 6, wherein the server is stored in non-volatile memory.
- 20 8. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the requesting middleware engine is coupled to the application only via the proxy, whereby the application may be created or modified independently of the middleware engine.
- 25 9. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the resource middleware engine is coupled to the resource only via the server, whereby the resource may be created or modified independently of the middleware engine.
10. A system as claimed in claim 9, wherein the server registers automatically with the resource middleware engine.

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11. A system as claimed in claim 10, wherein servers for both active and redundant resources register with the resource middleware engine to provide automatic redundancy.
- 5 12. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the requesting application comprises means for creating the proxy by presenting a logical or a physical key for the resource and the function.
- 10 13. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the message includes the key and function parameter arguments.
14. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the proxy controls one of a plurality of types of message transactions, including a synchronous type in which the function is invoked, a response is awaited and a return value is passed to the requesting application, and a synchronous type in which the function is invoked only.
- 15 15. A system as claimed in claim 14, wherein the proxy controls a deferred synchronous transaction in which a function is invoked, a reply is transmitted and an application retrieves the reply later.
- 20 16. A system as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein the proxy initiates multiple re-tries upon failure of the requested function.
- 25 17. A telecommunication system comprising a messaging system as claimed in any preceding claim

30

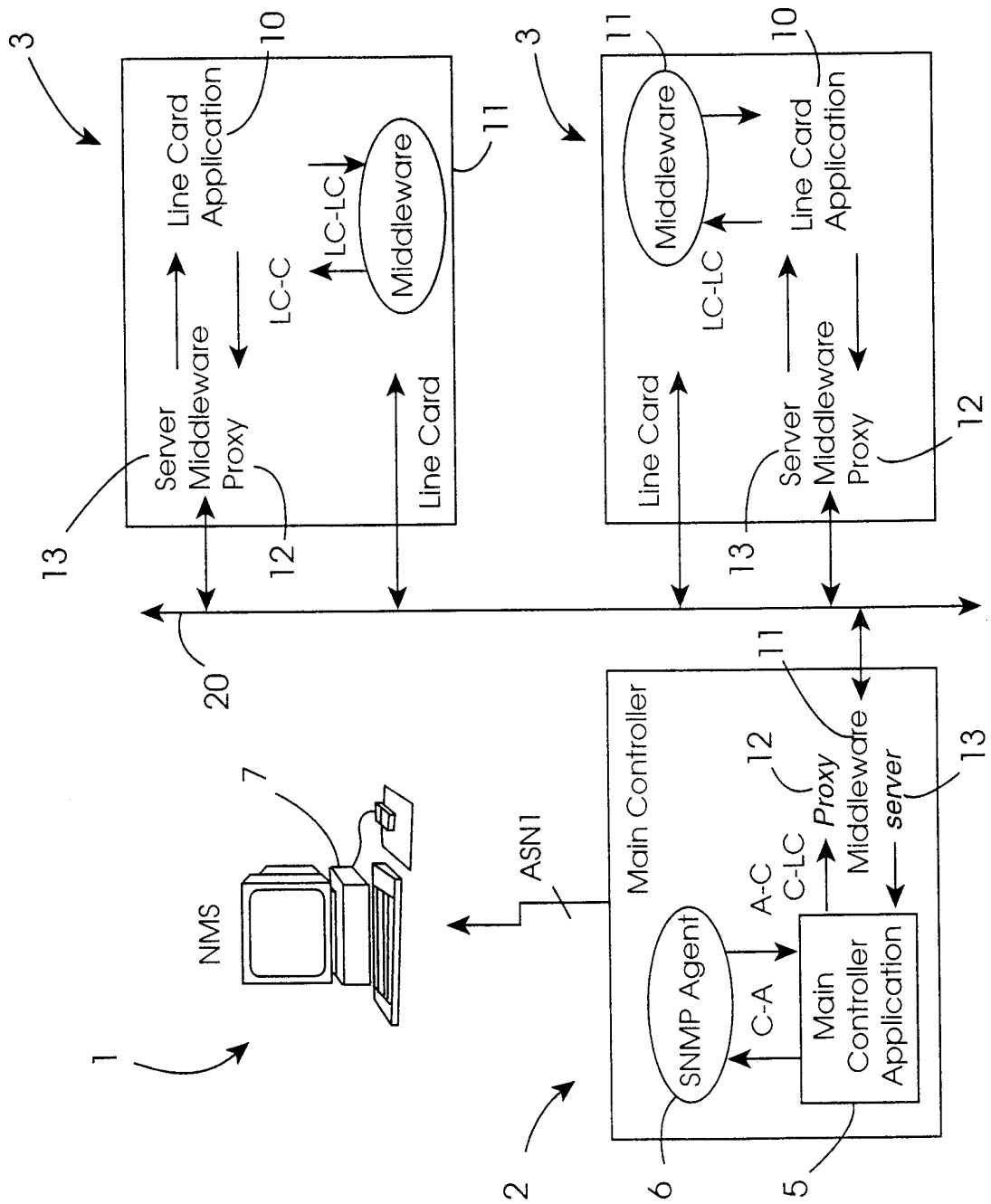


Fig. 1

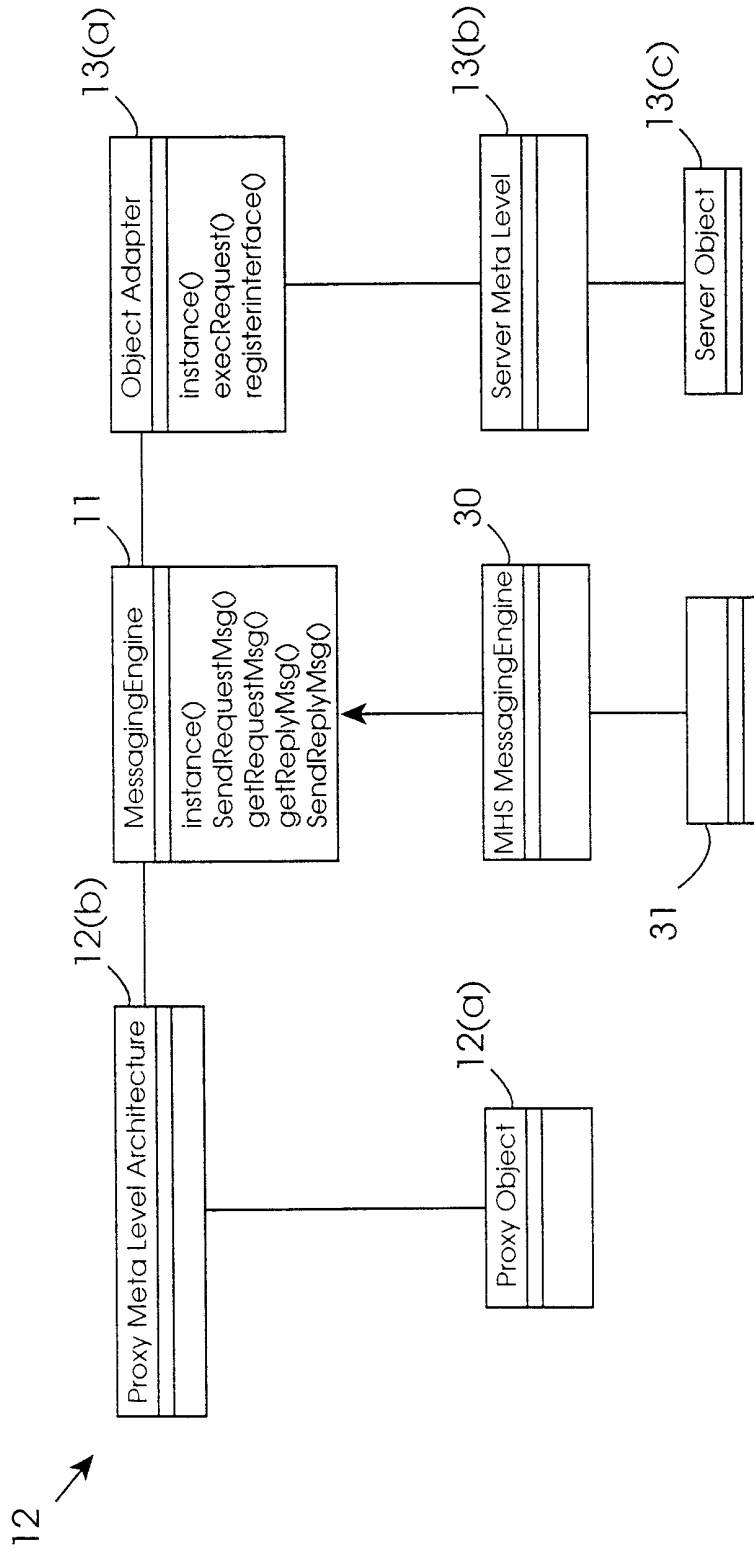


Fig. 2

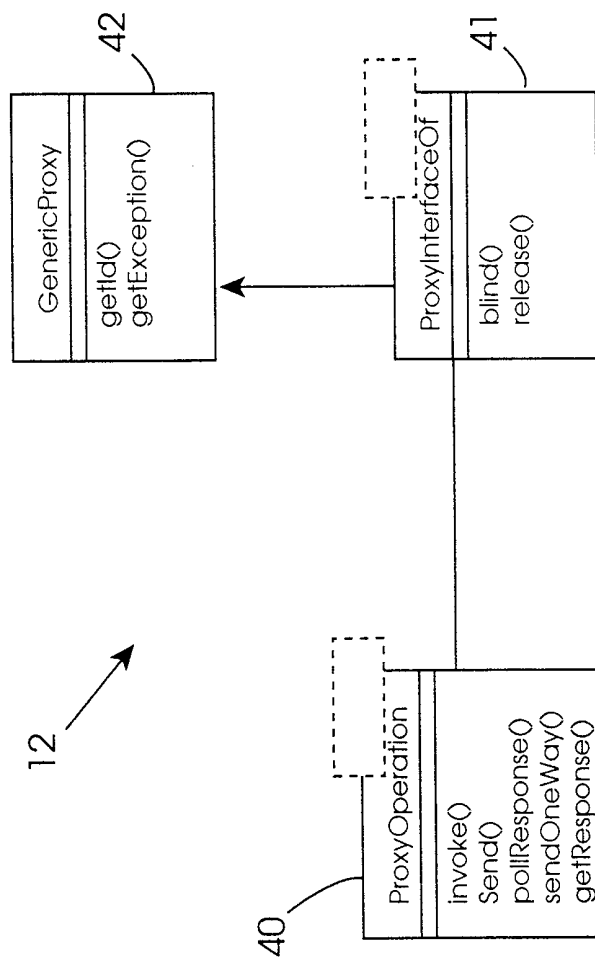


Fig. 3

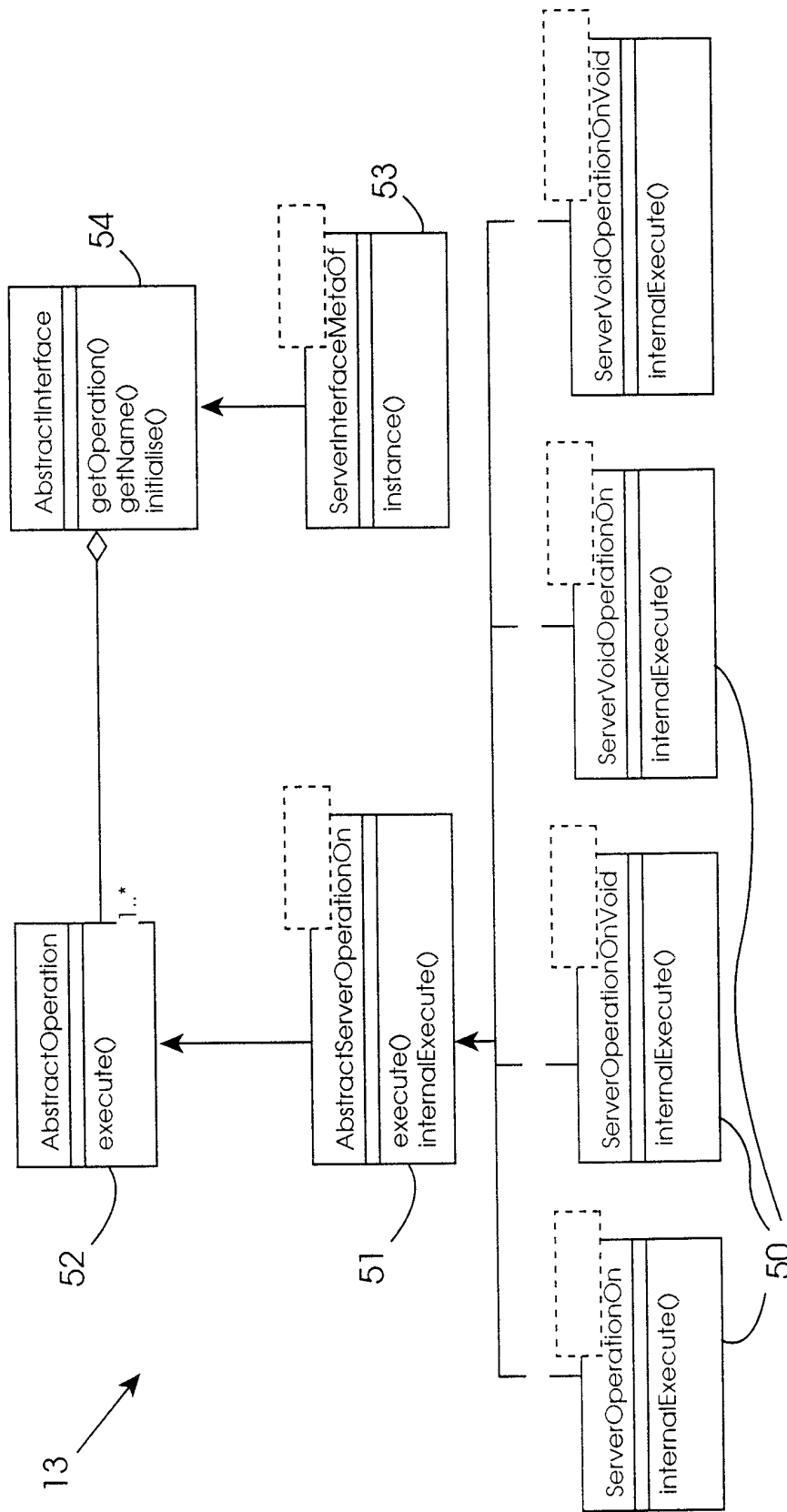


Fig. 4

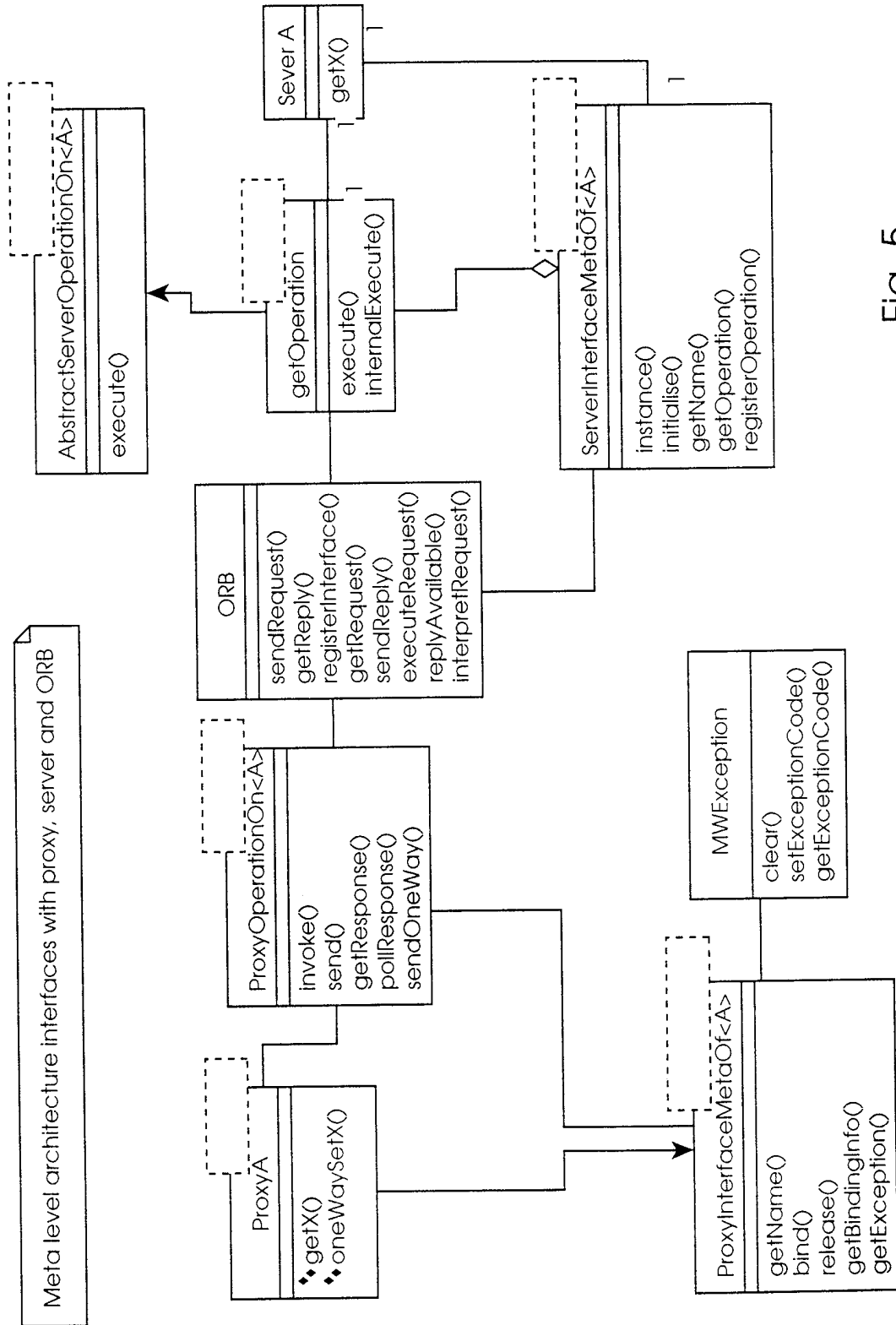


Fig. 5

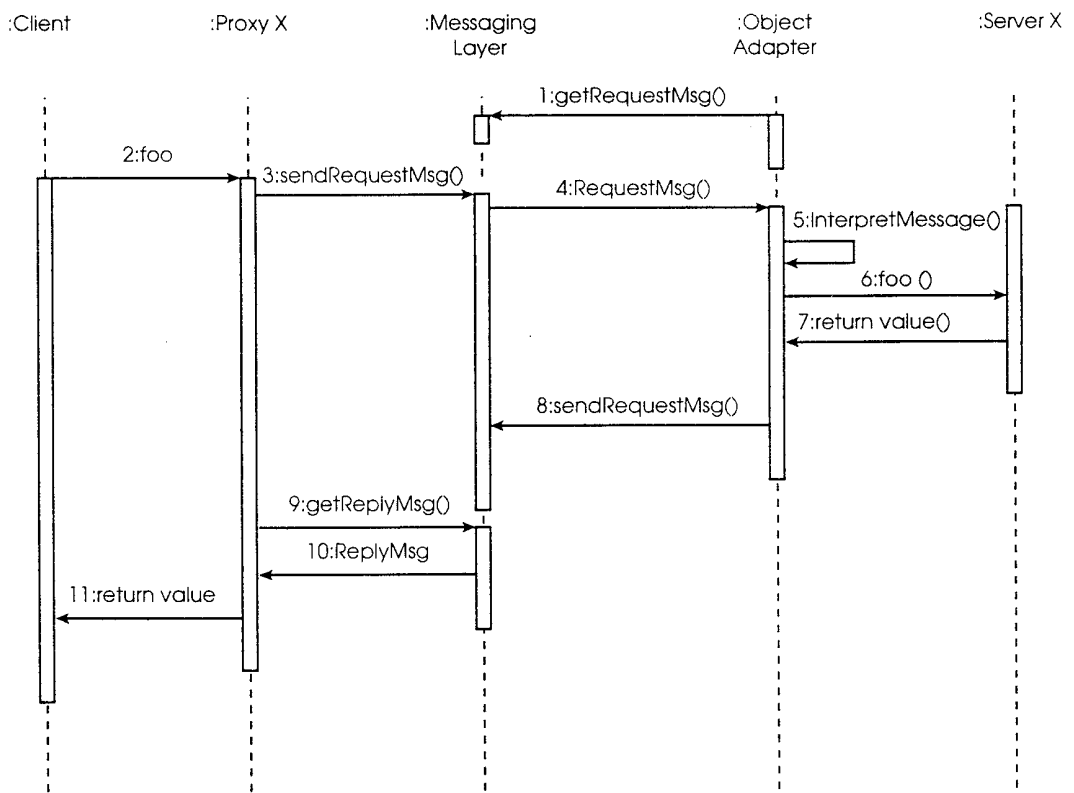


Fig. 6

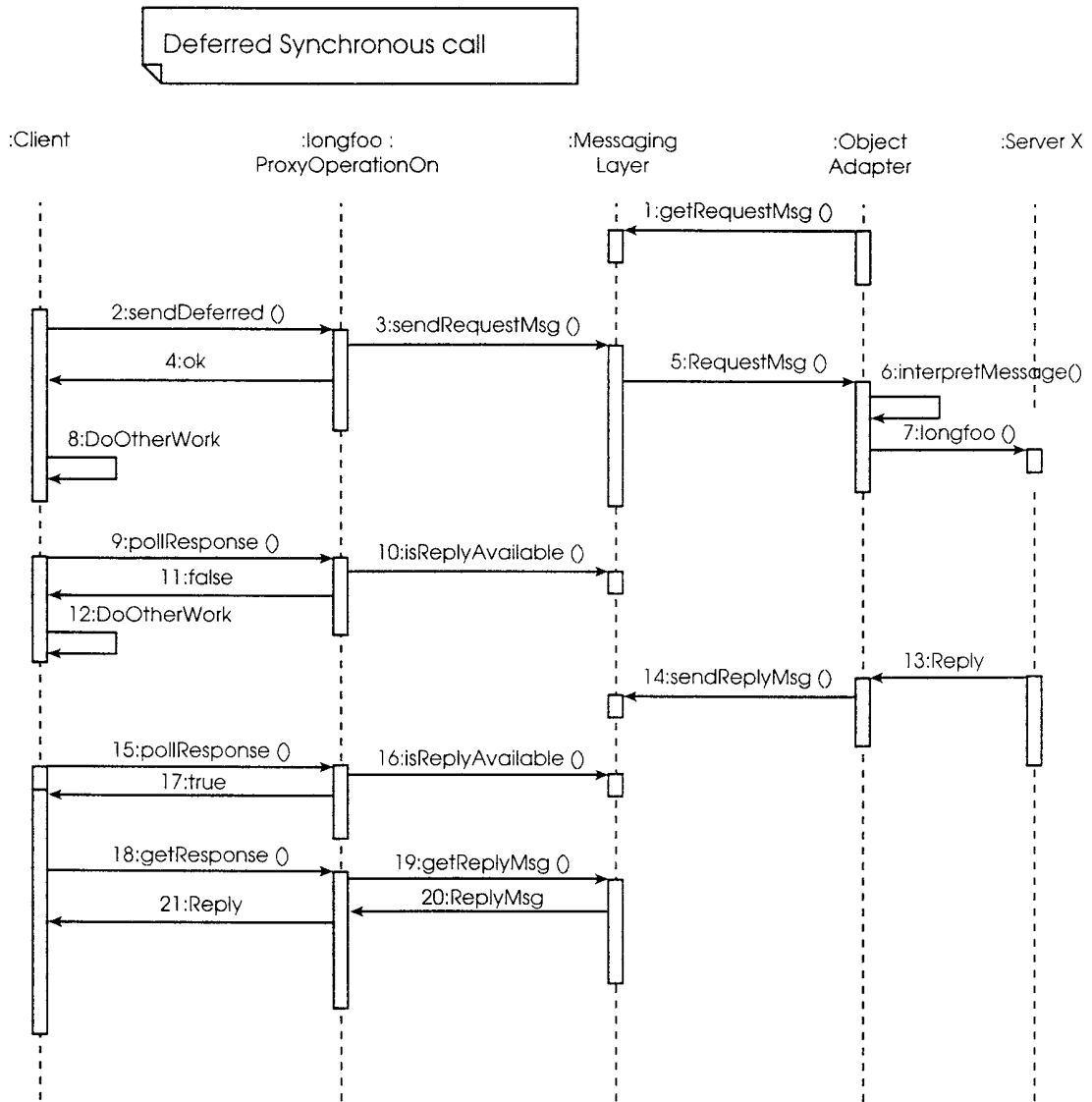


Fig. 7

One way synchronous

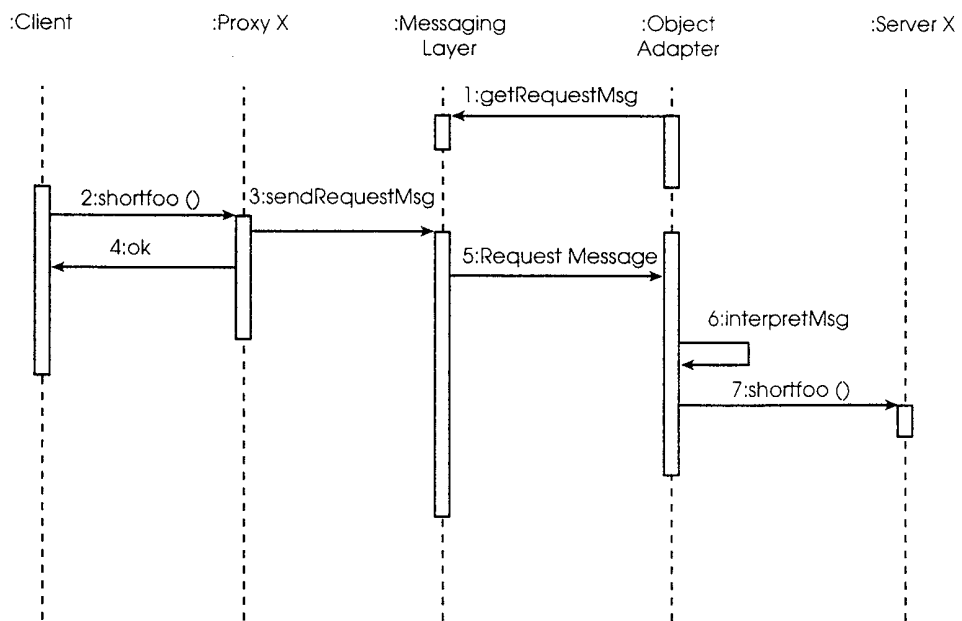


Fig. 8

Comm failure on Messaging Layer; Message not sent

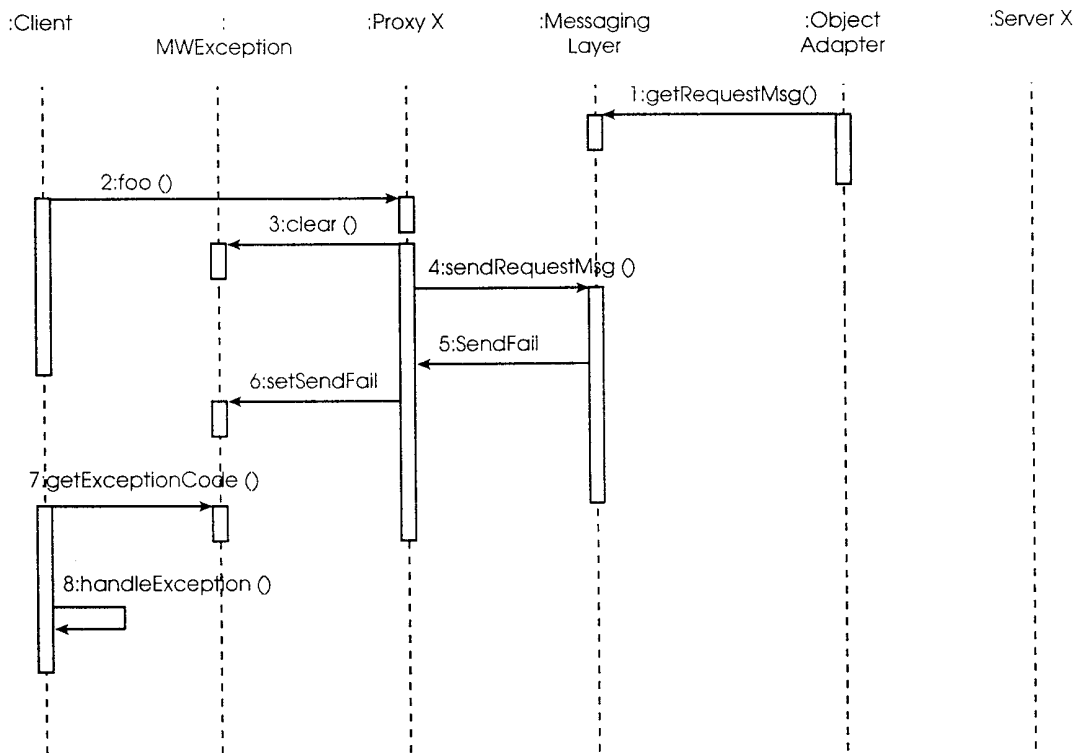


Fig. 9

Comm failure on Messaging Layer; Message sent but not received

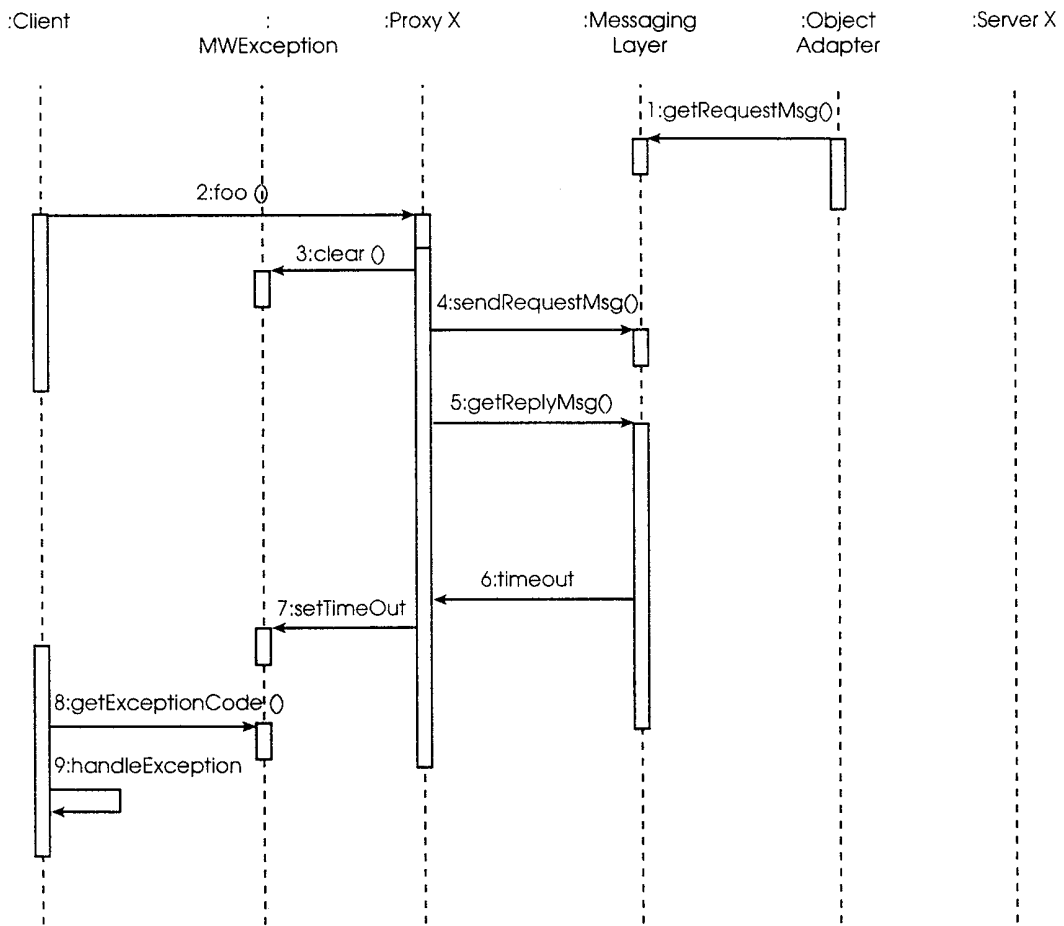


Fig. 10

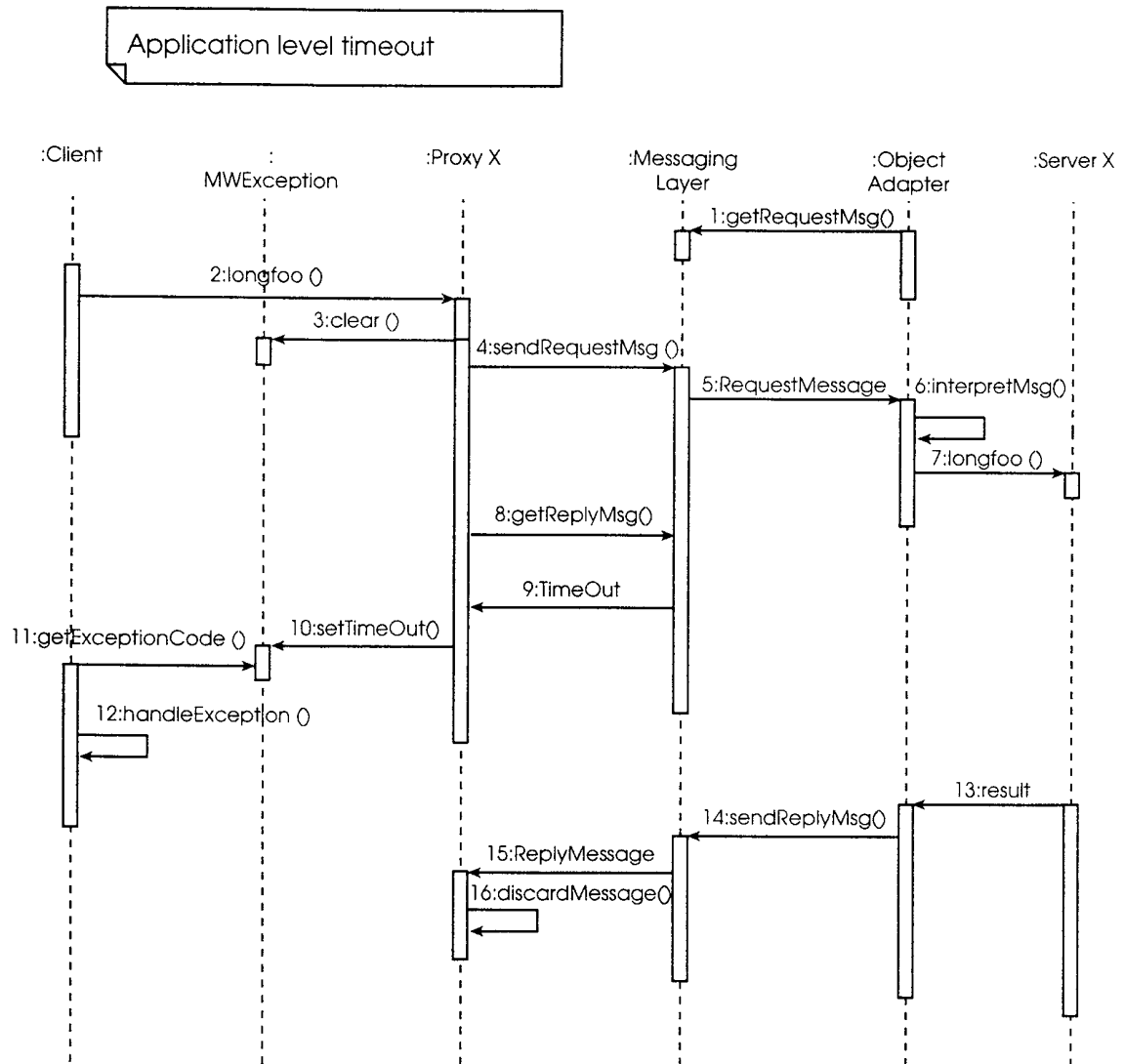


Fig. 11

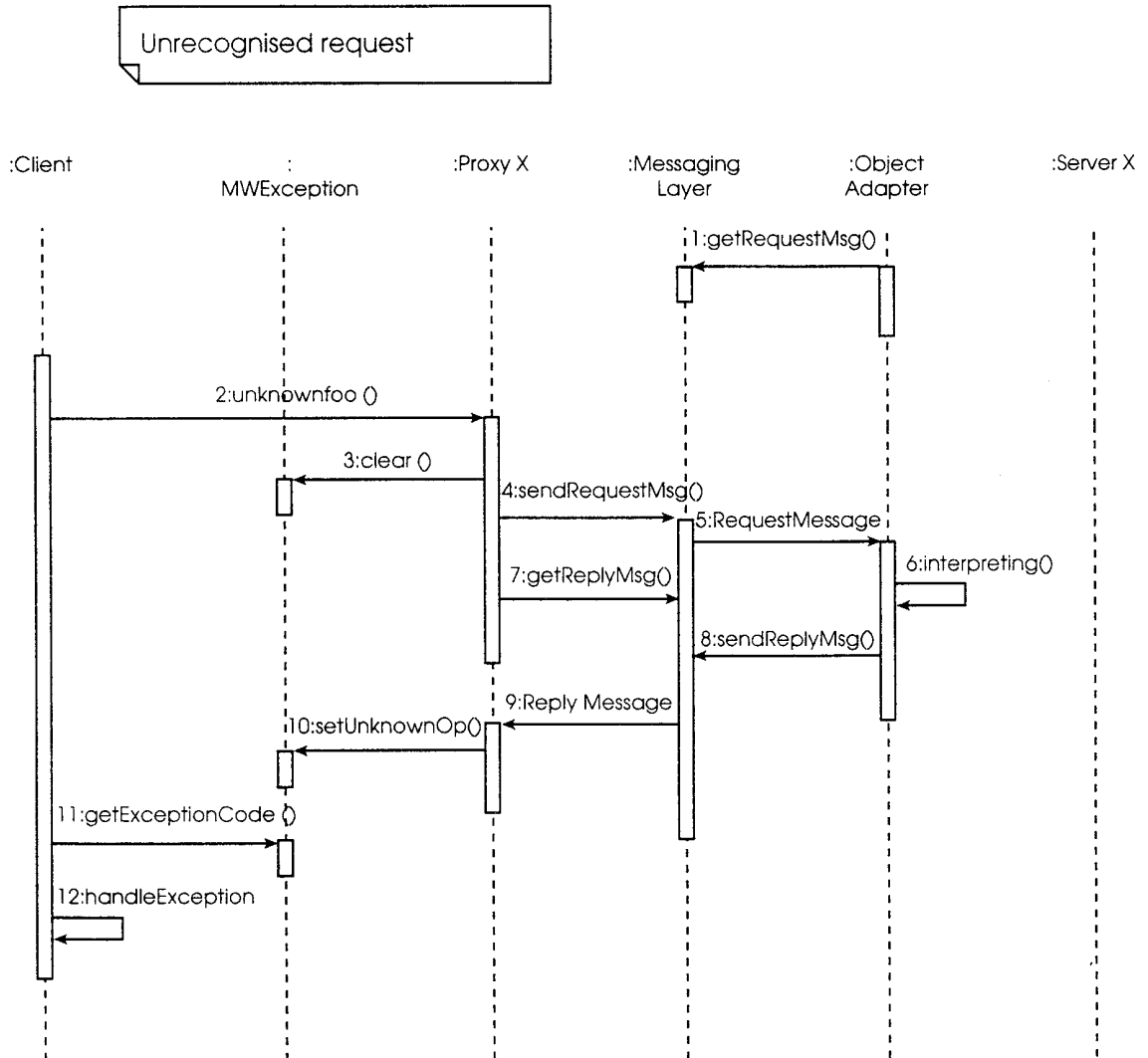


Fig. 12

Synchronous invocation which generates an user level exception

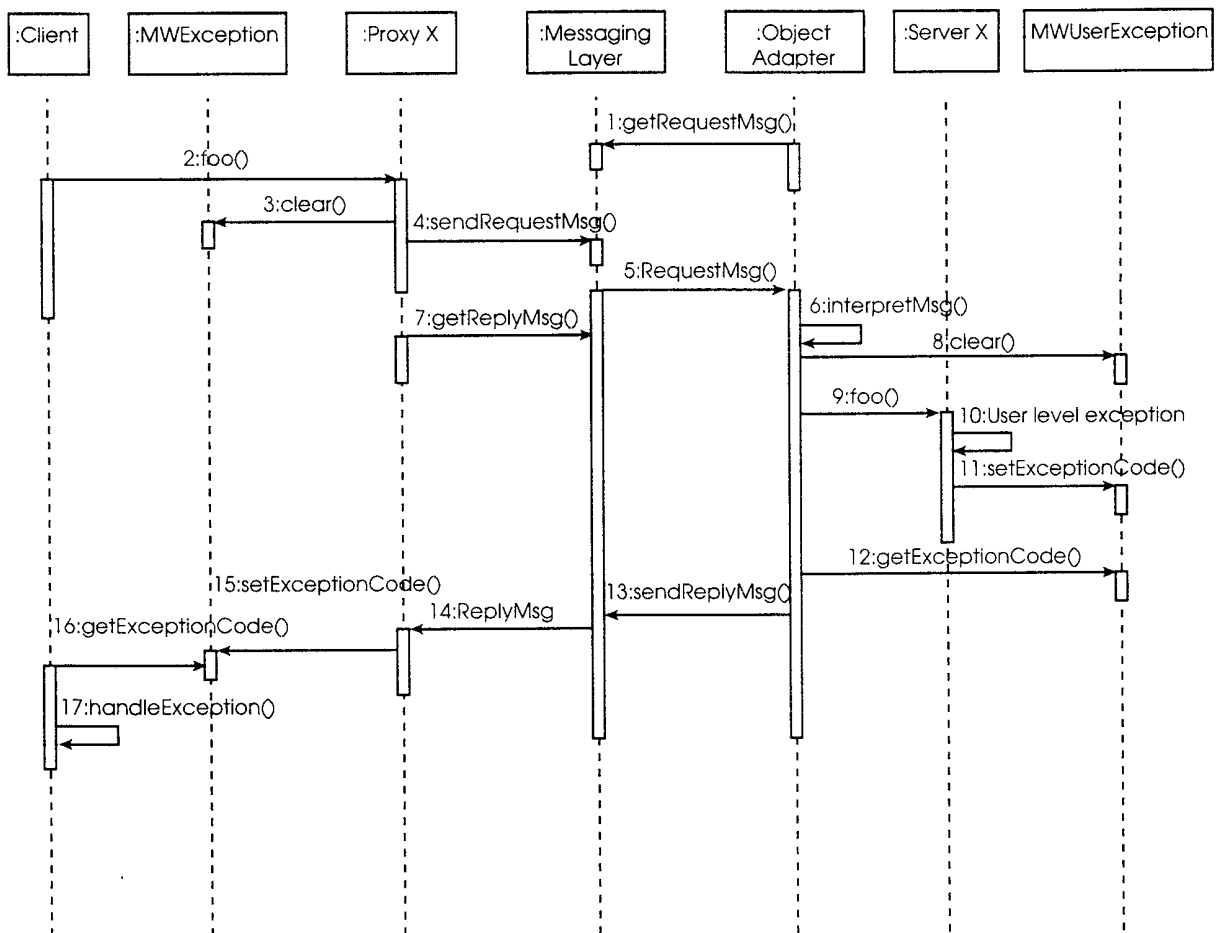


Fig. 13

Get the card state

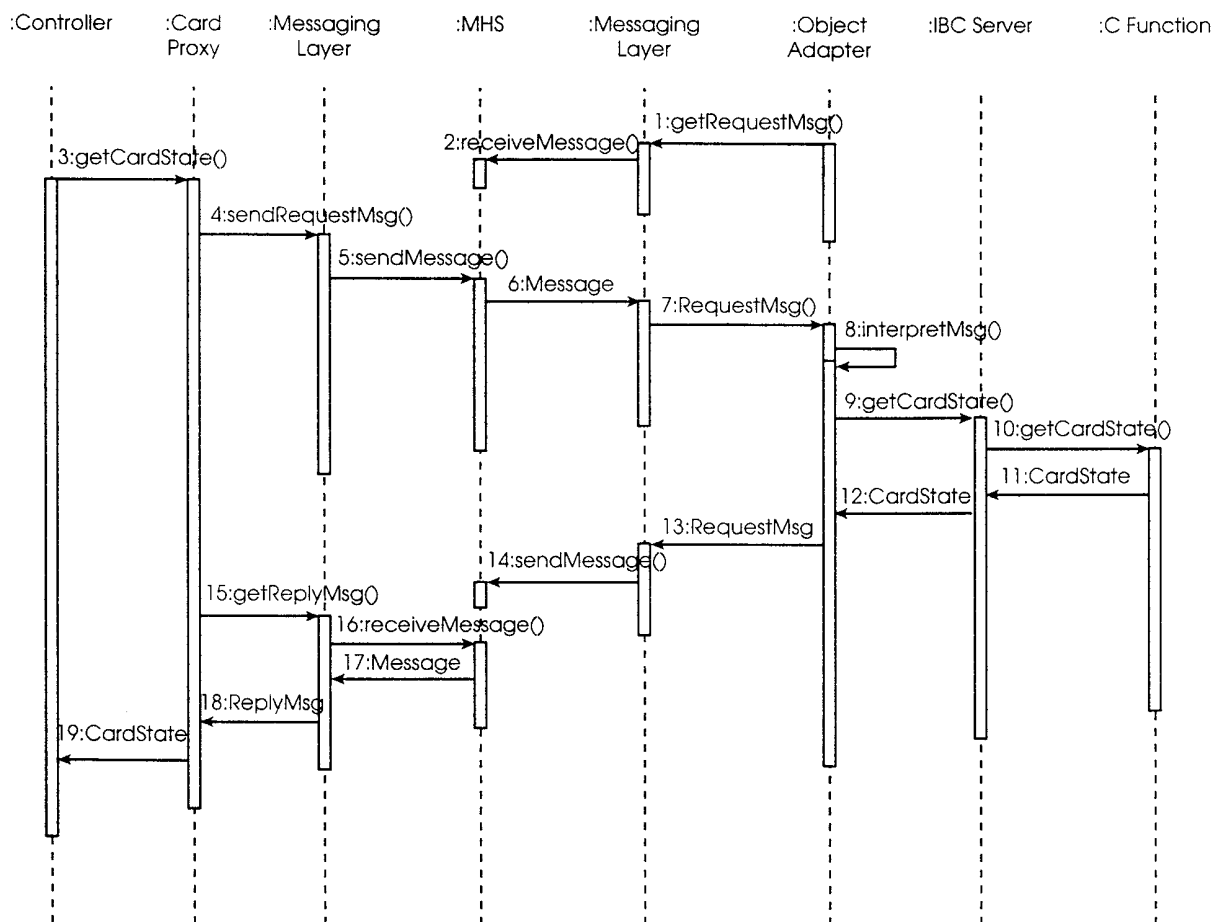


Fig. 14

Get Line Status of DS1 on IPC

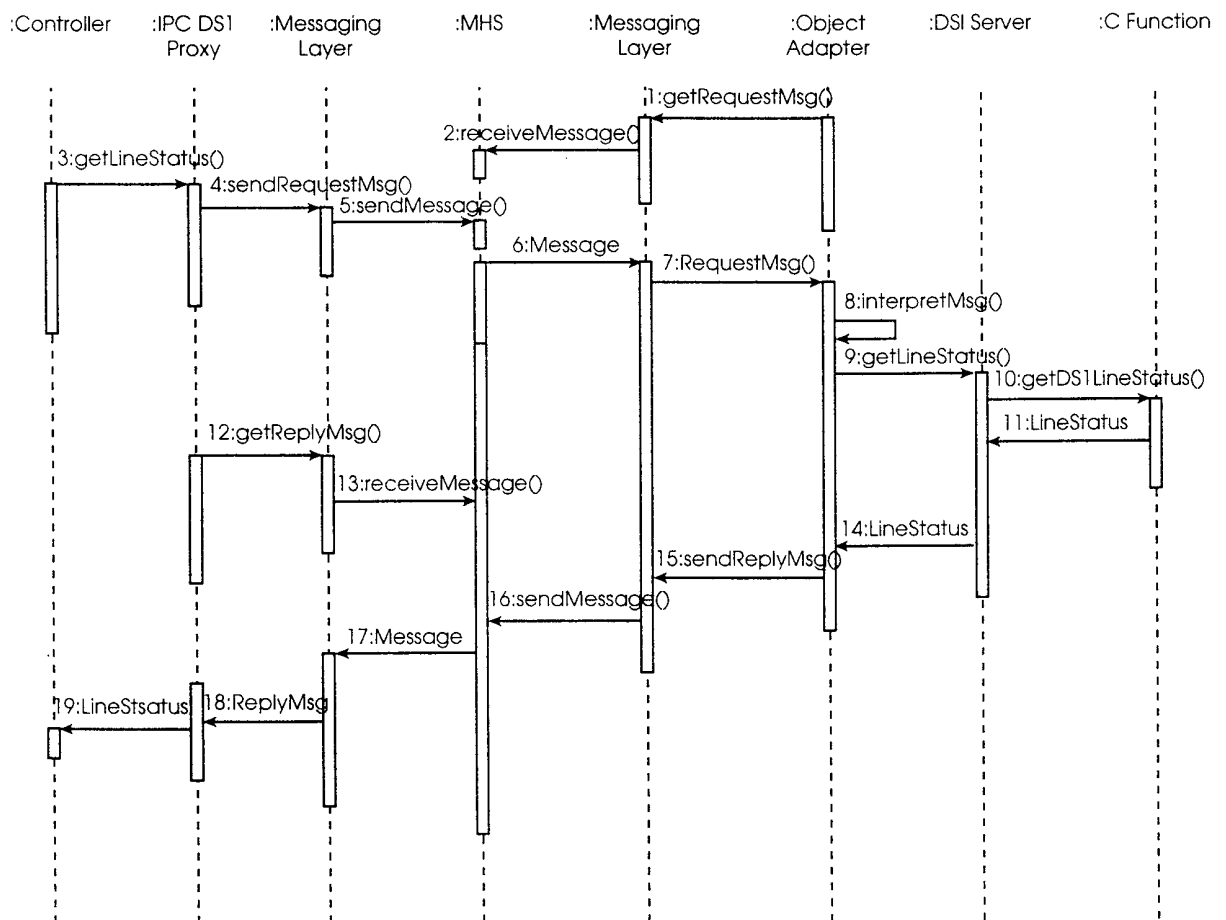


Fig. 15

Alarm Notification of loss of signal on DS1 (One way)

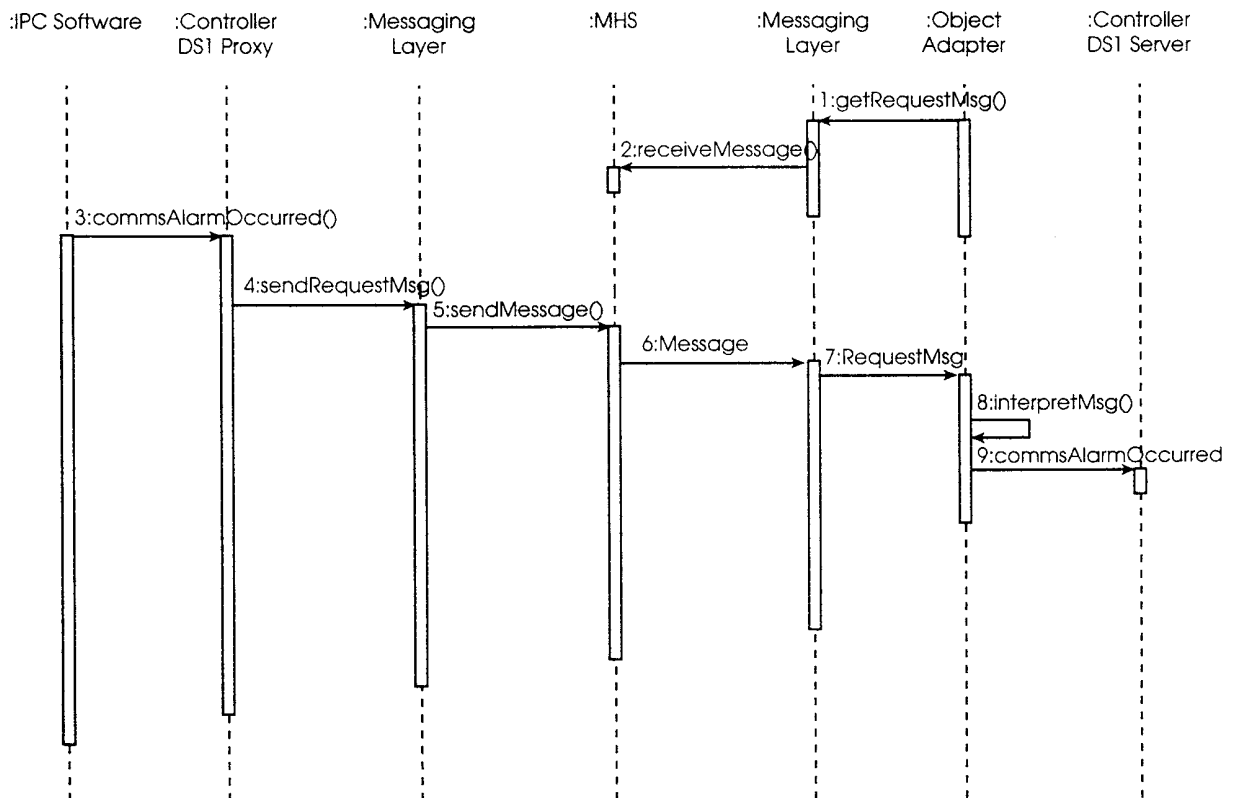


Fig. 16

Deferred Synchronous - Software Download

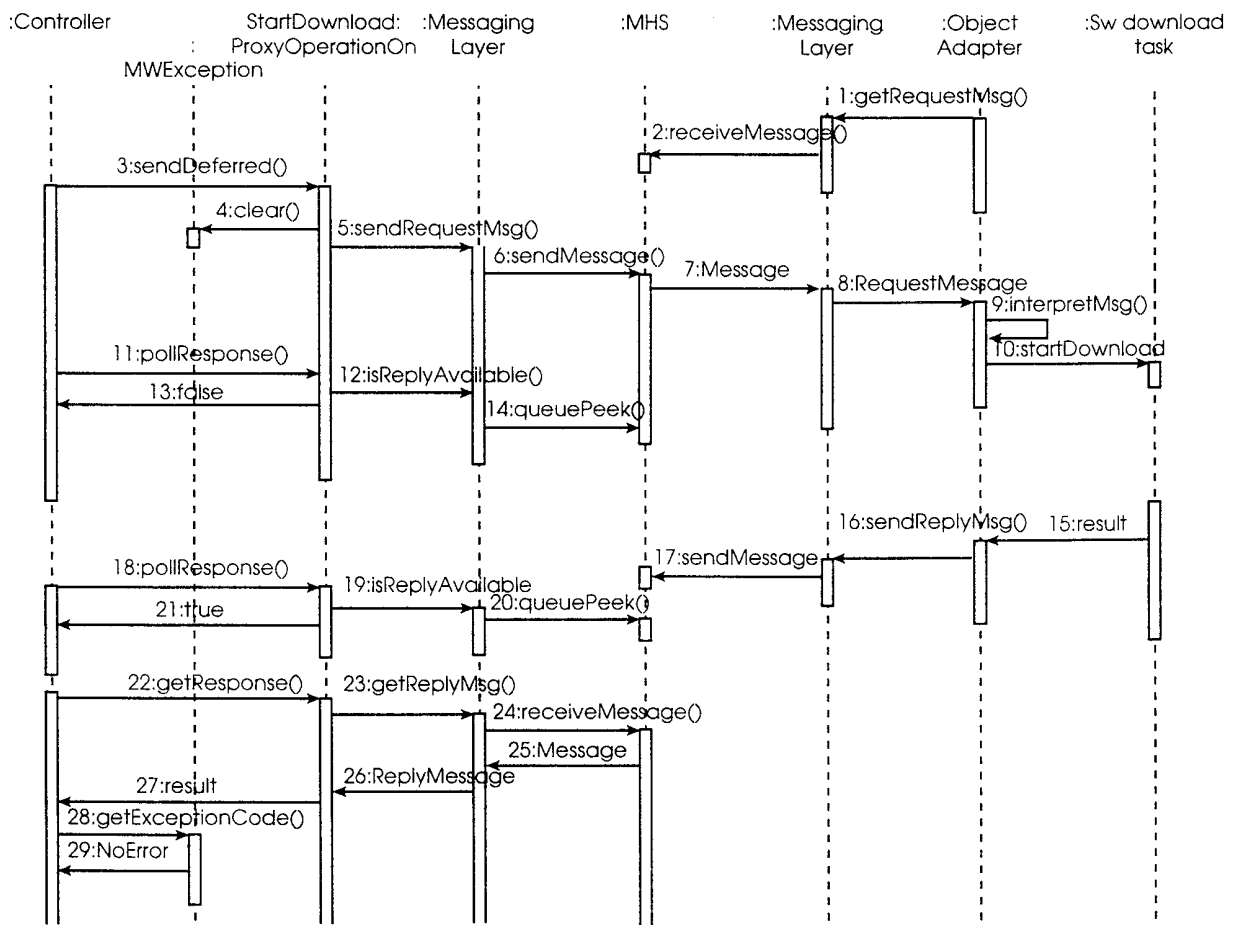


Fig. 17

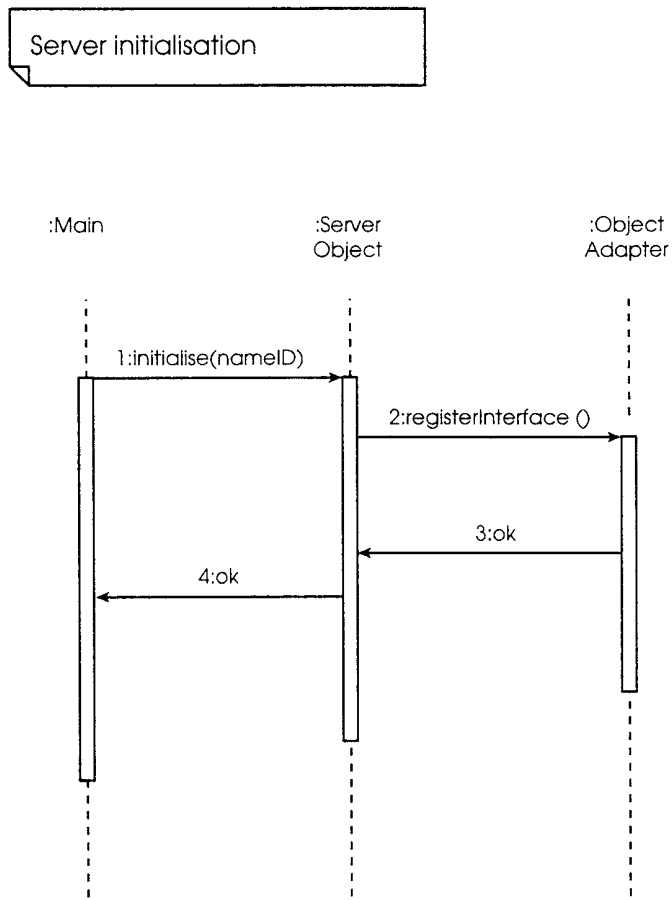


Fig. 18

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Inter- national Application No PCT/IE 98/00108

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 IPC 6 H04L12/24 G06F9/46

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
 IPC 6 G06F H04L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US 5 678 006 A (VALIZADEH H S ET AL) 14 October 1997 see column 1, line 15 - column 2, line 24; figure 1 ---	1,3-6, 8-10, 12-15,17
Y	HEITE R ET AL: "EXTENDING DCE RPC BY DYNAMIC OBJECTS AND DYNAMIC TYPING" DCE - THE OSF DISTRIBUTED COMPUTING ENVIRONMENT. CLIENT/SERVER MODEL AND BEYOND. INTERNATIONAL DCE WORKSHOP, 7 October 1993, pages 214-228, XP000609570 see paragraph 1 --- <div style="text-align: right;">-/--</div>	1,3-6, 8-10, 12-15,17

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.
 Patent family members are listed in annex.

° Special categories of cited documents :

<p>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p>	<p>T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</p> <p>Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</p> <p>Z" document member of the same patent family</p>
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Date of the actual completion of the international search <div style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">29 April 1999</div>	Date of mailing of the international search report <div style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">09/06/1999</div>
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Name and mailing address of the ISA European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer <div style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Ströbeck, A</div>
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Inter national Application No PCT/IE 98/00108

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	BINDU RAMA RAO: "MAKING THE MOST OF MIDDLEWARE" DATA COMMUNICATIONS, vol. 24, no. 12, 1 September 1995, page 89/90, 92, 94, 96 XP000527750 see page 89, "Middleware for the Muddled" -----	14, 15

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/IE 98/00108

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
US 5678006 A	14-10-1997	AU 5578396 A	18-11-1996
		CA 2217001 A	31-10-1996
		EP 0873618 A	28-10-1998
		WO 9634475 A	31-10-1996
