Romanian Symboloud Grid Family Evidence and Design Rationale

The evidence shared with the UK English family and the decisions specific to Romanian

Purpose and conclusion

This report describes the eight Romanian Symboloud vocabulary grids, explains how the family grows from Easy Access 4 to Core Communication 90, and records the evidence and language decisions behind the design. It is intended for AAC professionals, Romanian-speaking reviewers, families, educators and product teams.

A separate Romanian rationale is justified because the display evidence is shared with the UK English family, but the language system is not. Research on multilingual AAC cautions against translating an English core list word for word. AAC systems in another language need to account for that language's vocabulary, morphology, syntax, writing system and cultural context (Amery et al., 2022; Soto and Tönsing, 2024) [2,10]. The Romanian family therefore retains Symboloud's established grid architecture while rebuilding the language content around Romanian forms and communication needs.

The family is evidence-informed, not clinically proven as a universal Romanian layout. The research supports the principles used: several field sizes, core and topic vocabulary, stable organisation, personalisation, language-specific grammar and access to more than requesting. The exact words, positions and transition points remain Symboloud product decisions that require individual assessment and continued review with Romanian-speaking AAC users and professionals.

The completed Romanian family

The eight files form one planned pathway. Each larger source grid retains every distinct visible label from the preceding set. Vocabulary increases from 17 distinct words and phrases in Easy Access 4 to 573 in Core Communication 90, while Home expands from four large positions to a 10 × 9 display with 70 words and all 20 topic routes visible.

Vocabulary set	Grid	Description	Tile placements	Distinct labels
Easy Access 4	2 × 2	Four large choices per screen, with immediate access to wanting, refusal, help and More, plus linked language for people, basic actions, urgent support and personal information.	19	17
Easy Access 6	3 × 2	A spacious set for simple requests, refusal, feelings, body vocabulary and asking for help.	41	39
Easy Access 12	4 × 3	Eleven words on Home, with linked vocabulary for everyday communication, health, support and personal information.	155	105
Easy Access 18	6 × 3	Direct access to questions, needs and feelings, with a broader range of everyday topics.	332	217
Easy Access 24	6 × 4	More immediately available language and greater depth across everyday topics, personal information and support.	439	316
Core Communication 30	6 × 5	Twenty-four words and six direct topic routes on Home, with broader sentence-building and everyday vocabulary.	532	406
Core Communication 50	10 × 5	Forty words and ten direct topic routes on Home, with expanded pronouns, questions, Romanian verb forms, connecting words and topic vocabulary.	743	536

Vocabulary set	Grid	Description	Tile placements	Distinct labels
Core Communication 90	10 × 9	Seventy words and all 20 topic routes on Home, providing the fullest Romanian core, grammar, personal, support and everyday vocabulary in the family.	805	573

The counts above are verified product records from the current Romanian description workbook. Tile placements count repeated uses of vocabulary across linked folders; distinct labels count different visible words and phrases. They describe the build and are not research findings.

Evidence shared with the UK English family

Several field sizes

Symboloud does not assume that one grid size will suit every communicator. Target size, the number of choices, motor control, visual access and the amount of available language interact. Bertucco and Sanger's individualised touchscreen model produced different optimal layouts for different children with dyskinetic cerebral palsy, including estimates from 4 to 24 buttons (Bertucco and Sanger, 2018) [3]. The study did not test Symboloud or Romanian vocabulary, but it supports offering a range rather than treating one field size as universally best.

Core and topic vocabulary

Every grid combines reusable words with personal, support and topic vocabulary. This supports communication functions beyond requesting and avoids a noun-heavy system. Core-vocabulary and professional guidance support access to pronouns, verbs, descriptors and questions alongside personalised and context-specific words (ASHA, n.d.; Erickson et al., 2019; Project Core, 2019; RCSLT, 2026) [1,4,7,8].

The smaller grids contain genuinely smaller vocabularies. They do not place all 573 labels behind extensive navigation. This preserves the access benefit of fewer choices and creates real vocabulary growth between sets. Any grid can remain a long-term option; the family is not a developmental ladder that every person must climb.

Stable organisation and vocabulary inheritance

Stable locations and predictable grouping can reduce visual search and support repeated learning. Research on AAC display design supports deliberate spatial organisation, reduced crowding and consistent symbol locations, while also showing that performance depends on the individual and the task (Light et al., 2019; Wilkinson, Gilmore and Qian, 2022) [6,12]. Exact coordinates cannot remain identical when a display changes from two to ten columns, so Symboloud preserves vocabulary, broad grammatical direction and familiar routes rather than claiming coordinate-level motor-plan continuity between every size.

Colour and the Modified Fitzgerald Key

All eight grids use the same Modified Fitzgerald Key used in the UK English family. This provides a familiar grammatical cue for UK-based teams and maintains consistency when a supporter works across Symboloud language sets. Smartbox documents a related UK implementation convention in Super Core (Smartbox, 2022) [9].

Colour	Purpose
Yellow	People and pronouns
Green	Actions and verbs
Orange	Naming words
Blue	Describing words
Purple	Question words
Grey	Little words and navigation
Pink	Social language and complete phrases
Red	Important function words

Colour is treated as a secondary cue. Thistle and Wilkinson found a benefit from word-class arrangement but not from background colour in their study, while wider display research indicates that grouping, spacing, crowding and colour interact (Thistle and Wilkinson, 2017; Light et al., 2019) [6,11]. Printed Romanian labels, the symbol, grouping and learned position remain primary. Colour may be reduced or removed when it interferes with access.

Consistent symbols

Shared concepts use consistent SymbolStix choices across the eight grids. Symbol consistency reduces unnecessary visual relearning when vocabulary appears in more than one folder or when a communicator moves to a larger set. Where two Romanian forms express different grammatical meanings, the cells may need distinct symbols even when an English search term would return the same image. Symbol choice must remain understandable to the communicator and should be reviewed in use rather than assumed from the library search term alone.

Romanian language decisions

A Romanian system rather than a translated English list

Published core lists vary across languages, and a useful concept in one language may not map to a single equivalent word or grammatical form in another. Soto and Tönsing argue that core lists should not simply be translated because vocabulary represents language-specific concepts and grammar (Soto and Tönsing, 2024) [10]. A review of non-English AAC development similarly found that vocabulary representation, semantics, morphology, syntax, speech and culture all affect system design (Amery et al., 2022) [2].

The Romanian family therefore retains the communication purposes and growth principles of the UK English set without copying its surface forms. Topic content includes Romanian family, food, education, work, transport, health and social vocabulary, and the Personal and Sprijin folders provide phrases for identity, consent, urgent help and communication repair.

Useful inflected verbs

Romanian verbs carry person and number information, and their inflection is substantially richer than English. The grid uses immediately speakable first-person forms such as vreau, merg, simt, fac, pot, am, iau and dau rather than presenting only dictionary infinitives. The purpose is practical: selecting one cell should often produce a useful message without requiring the user to assemble an English-style subject-plus-infinitive sequence. Romanian verb morphology supports the need to treat these forms as distinct language choices (Herce and Pricop, 2025) [5].

Pronouns and omitted subjects

Romanian commonly permits an unspoken subject because verb agreement identifies person and number. The grids do not force a pronoun before every verb. Pronouns such as eu, tu, el, ea, noi, voi, ei and ele remain available for emphasis, contrast, clarification and reference to other people. This balances natural Romanian sentence building with the value of explicit pronouns in AAC teaching and repair (Vasilescu, 2026) [14].

Gender number and determiners

Larger grids introduce contrasts that matter in Romanian, including masculine and feminine demonstratives and determiners such as acesta and aceasta, acela and aceea, acest and această, acel and acea, and un and o. These are not decorative duplicates. They give access to grammatical distinctions that English often expresses with one form. Descriptors use a practical default form on the grid and should be personalised or expanded where gender and number agreement are important to the communicator's everyday messages.

Clitics complete phrases and function words

Some high-value messages are clearer as complete Romanian forms, including ajută-mă, îmi place, nu-mi place, mă numesc and nu mă atinge. Larger grids add function words and markers such as că, să, pentru că, dacă, de, din, la, în and pe. A symbol cannot fully represent every grammatical use of these short words, so the printed label, speech output, colour and stable location work together. English translations in language-map exports are support material for English-speaking teams; they are not replacements for the Romanian label or speech.

Romanian diacritics and orthography

The grid retains Romanian diacritics in labels and speech, including ă, â, î, ș and ț. The Romanian Academy's DOOM3 is the current normative reference for spelling, pronunciation and morphology in standard Romanian (Academia Română, 2021) [13]. Removing diacritics can change pronunciation, reduce readability and weaken text-to-speech output, so they should be preserved in the grid, exported language maps and website descriptions.

Personal and culturally relevant vocabulary

The stock vocabulary is a starting point. Names, relationships, foods, routines, places, schooling, work, faith, health information and preferred expressions must reflect the individual and their Romanian-speaking community. ASHA guidance and the non-English AAC scoping review both support language- and culture-relevant vocabulary and personalisation (ASHA, n.d.; Amery et al., 2022) [1,2]. Personalisation should add useful language without casually moving established high-frequency positions.

How the family grows

Transition	Vocabulary growth	What the added capacity provides
Easy Access 4 to 6	17 to 39 distinct labels	Adds explicit self-reference, yes, more actions, emotions, body vocabulary and additional support language.
Easy Access 6 to 12	39 to 105	Adds a compact Home vocabulary and broader everyday topic pages for description, health, food, home, places, technology and personal information.
Easy Access 12 to 18	105 to 217	Adds direct questions, needs and sentence-building forms, while opening school, leisure, time, nature, animals, numbers and other topics.
Easy Access 18 to 24	217 to 316	Adds am, iau, dau, aici, acolo and cum on Home and deepens the established topic pages.
Easy Access 24 to Core Communication 30	316 to 406	Moves six high-value topic routes onto Home and expands questions, feelings, actions and sentence-building vocabulary.
Core Communication 30 to 50	406 to 536	Expands pronouns, questions, common verb forms, connecting words and topic vocabulary, with ten direct Home routes.
Core Communication 50 to 90	536 to 573	Places 70 words and all 20 routes on Home and completes the family's broadest Romanian grammar and topic architecture.

Text to speech and the device keyboard

Symboloud uses a compatible Android text-to-speech voice installed on the device. Romanian speech therefore depends on the available speech engine, Romanian voice and Android configuration. The selected voice should be tested with diacritics, names, inflected verbs, clitics and longer personal phrases. A correct written grid cannot guarantee natural pronunciation from every third-party voice.

The family does not duplicate a full spelling page inside each grid because the Android device keyboard provides alphabetic entry. This keeps the grid vocabulary focused on symbol-supported communication while leaving spelling available through the device. Whether the keyboard is accessible and appropriate remains an individual decision.

Evidence boundaries and intended use

No published study establishes the exact Symboloud Romanian vocabulary, cell sequence or eight transition points. The Romanian family has not been represented here as a clinically validated standard for all Romanian AAC users. Studies of display arrangement often use small or diagnosis-specific samples, and evidence for grammatical background colour is mixed. Romanian-specific AAC research remains limited compared with English-language research.

The practical conclusion is to use the family as a coherent starting point and then personalise it. Selection should consider visual access, motor control, language, literacy, communication partners, environments and the person's own priorities. Teams should preserve useful learned locations, test Romanian speech on the actual device and seek input from the communicator and Romanian-speaking partners. Feedback should lead to revisions where vocabulary, grammar, symbols or cultural content do not work naturally in use.

References

In-text citations use Harvard author-date form. Bracketed numbers link each claim to the corresponding numbered entry below. Internal Symboloud grid files and description records were used to verify the build but are not presented as research publications.

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