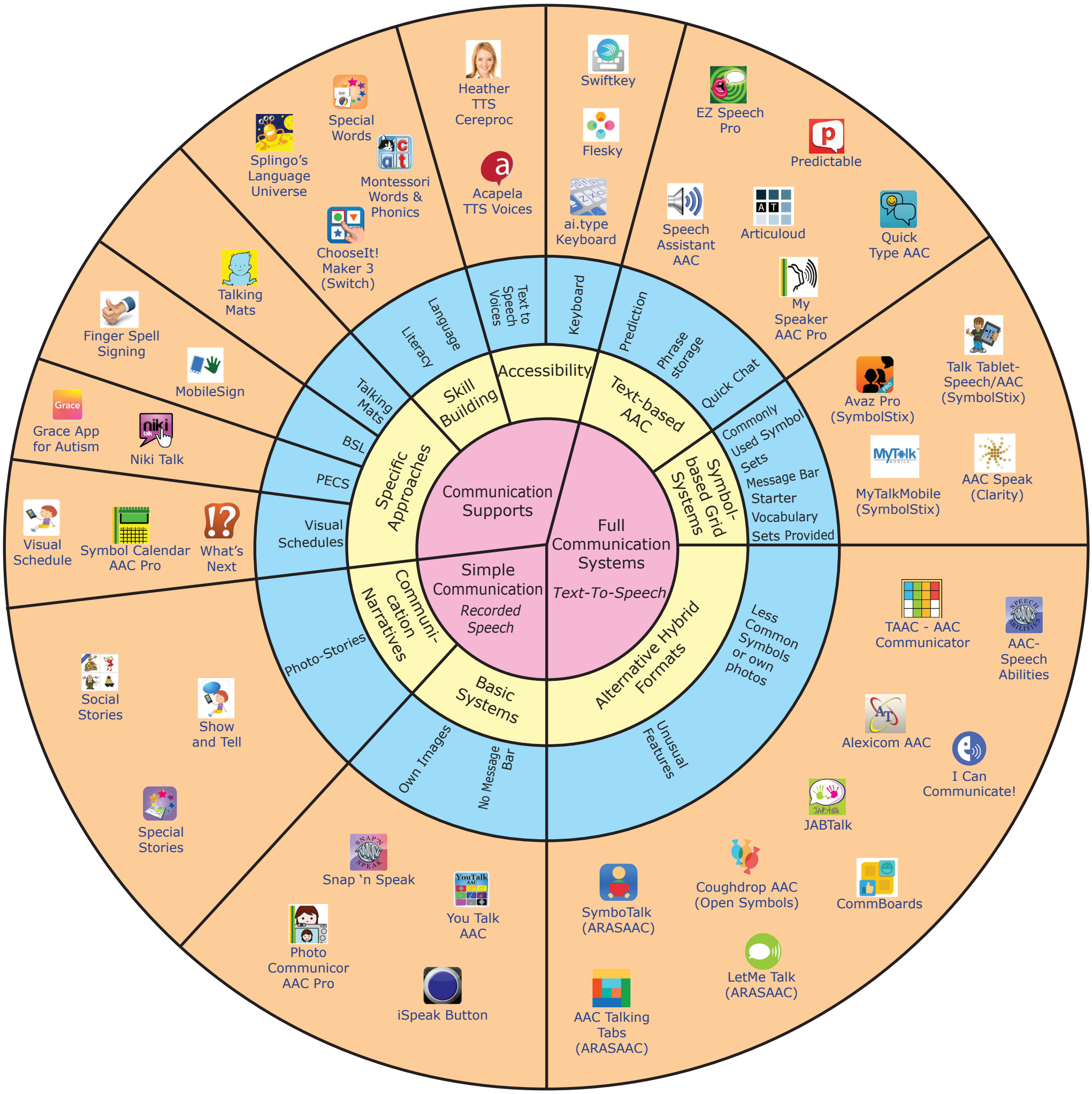
Android Apps for Complex Communication Support Needs: Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC)



iPad vs Android

The iPad is well established as a communication tool, but Android tablets (and smartphones) are being used more often, especially in the home situation, therefore useful to consider:

- Android tablets are generally less expensive than iPads
- The Android Operating System is less tightly controlled than the Apple iOS, so some apps, eg. text-to-speech voices, can work across most apps in an Android device, unlike the iPad where voices have to be downloaded separately for each app.
- There are many more AAC apps available for the iPad.
- There is a wide variation of Android tablet types, some with individualised Android Operating Systems and some with their own bespoke App store. Therefore, there is no guarantee that every AAC app for Android will work on all tablets/Operating Systems.
- Some Android devices cannot be upgraded to the latest version of the Operating System, so some apps won't work on them.

An electronic version (with clickable links) can be downloaded from http://www.callscotland.org.uk/downloads/posters-and-leaflets

Identifying Suitable Apps

This is not a comprehensive list, but an attempt to identify relevant apps for supporting AAC and to categorise them according to the function of the communication system. All Apps are available from the Google Play Store. A few have been tested, but most information is based on independent reviews and App developer descriptions. Unlike the iPad, there is little consensus on the 'best' Android apps for AAC. We'd be happy to receive suggestions for inclusion in future versions:call.scotland@ed.ac.uk.

Play Store

Switch Access

Switch access may be necessary for some users, requiring a USB or Bluetooth switch interface and switch(es) tailored to the user. There are very few Apps in the wheel that are designed specifically for switch access, but from Android Operating System 5 and above there are Accessibility settings built-in, allowing operation by one or two external switches (or by using the screen, as a switch, or head movements).
But always check first if the App selected can be accessed via these access methods and via the Switch Access Settings on your tablet.
Further information from Android help: http://bit.ly/1OmearQ

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