LETTER OF REVIEWERS

Reviewer A:
Recommendation: Revisions Required

Relevance: High
Novelty: Very high
Presentation and writing: High

Comments for authors:
1. The editorial establishes the issue's relevance, namely the limited adoption of realist approaches in psychological research across Spanish-speaking countries.
2. The author states: "In this editorial, we argue for the suitability of realist evaluation and synthesis for psychology and propose that more resources in Spanish, along with networks like RAICES, should be created and invested in to support meaningful uptake and use in Spanish-speaking communities." However, it would strengthen the argumentative framing to include an explicit statement of the editorial's objective (e.g., "This editorial aims to...").
3. The editorial presents a fluent and coherent discussion; nevertheless, it would benefit from including more concrete examples or impact data to support the claim regarding the slow adoption in Spanish-speaking countries (for instance, statistics on scientific output or available training in realist evaluation).
4. It would be advisable for the authors to briefly expand on potential solutions beyond the efforts of scientific or institutional communities like RAICES and RAMESES (e.g., reforms in postgraduate psychology or mental health training programs, integration of realist evaluation into official curricula).
5. The argument regarding "structural exclusion" due to language barriers is compelling. Still, it would be strengthened by explicitly citing a few sources that discuss how access to academic knowledge in English impacts global scientific equity, as there is relevant literature that could enhance this section.

RESPONSE LETTER

Response to Reviewers' and Editor's Comments

Dear David, Anthony and the Reviewer team,

We thank you for the opportunity to revise our manuscript entitled "Realist Evaluation and Synthesis in Psychology: Thriving in Complexity, Stalled by Language Barriers" (Manuscript ID: ID-458) We are grateful to you and the reviewers for your valuable comments and suggestions, which have helped us improve the quality and clarity of our manuscript.

Please find below our detailed responses to each of the comments raised by the editor and reviewers. For each comment, we have indicated the changes made in the manuscript and specified their exact location (e.g., paragraph 5, line number 3). A highlighted version of the revised manuscript is enclosed for your reference as per the email instructions.

Reviewer A

Comment 1: *The editorial establishes the issue's relevance, namely the limited adoption of realist approaches in psychological research across Spanish-speaking countries.*

Response: We appreciate the recognition of this issue, which is relevant for both Spanish-speaking communities and non-English communities. I have discussed this issue online with some of the most cited academics in this field, including Geoff Wong and Ana Manzano, who advocate for RAICES (the link to the website can now also be found in the official RAMESES website standards) and the work being done to translate and advocate for realist evaluation and synthesis in non-English contexts.

Comment 2: *The author states: "In this editorial, we argue for the suitability of realist evaluation and synthesis for psychology and propose that more resources in Spanish, along with networks like RAICES, should be created and invested in to support meaningful uptake and use in Spanish-speaking communities." However, it would strengthen the argumentative framing to include an explicit statement of the editorial's objective (e.g., "This editorial aims to...").*

Response: We have explicitly included a statement of the editorial objective by using the recommended language and the word "advocate," which makes the statement more explicit about the purpose of the piece—to advocate for the approach as a compelling way of learning about the psychological world and for its uptake, use, and increased integration in training and research. This revision can be found in paragraph 1, highlighted in yellow, line 14.

Comment 3: *The editorial presents a fluent and coherent discussion; nevertheless, it would benefit from including more concrete examples or impact data to support the claim regarding the slow adoption in Spanish-speaking countries (for instance, statistics on scientific output or available training in realist evaluation).*

Response: We have included concrete examples and citations to demonstrate further the slow adoption of non-English contexts, including Spanish-speaking countries and regions. For instance, Gilmore (2019) documents methodological challenges in non-English LMIC settings—including translation barriers, cultural mismatches, and reliance on Western theories—which further supports the view that uptake has been uneven and contextually challenging for non-English-speaking regions. This paper also points to a lack of formal training structures or support systems for realist evaluation outside English-speaking environments. The literature calls for capacity strengthening and locally appropriate theories in LMICs, suggesting such infrastructure is currently lacking. Booth et al. (2019) also support this claim. The paper documents the publication growth from 2 studies in 2009 to 72 in 2017, then a slight drop to 47 in 2018. This trend illustrates increased growth in English contexts but not in others. Of the 35 included realist reviews analysed from 2016, none were conducted in Spanish or from Spanish-speaking regions, offering strong bibliometric evidence of underrepresentation. This revision can be found in paragraph 1, highlighted in yellow, lines 9-13

Comment 4: *It would be advisable for the authors to briefly expand on potential solutions beyond the efforts of scientific or institutional communities like RAICES and RAMESES (e.g., reforms in postgraduate psychology or mental health training programs, integration of realist evaluation into official curricula).*

Response: We have actioned this comment by including the suggestions of reforms in psychology and training programmes and integration into official curricula, which we agree with and have presented as the broader systemic factors that are key for the sustainable uptake of realist evaluation and synthesis in

psychology. Furthermore, other potential solutions are advised. For instance, and linked to the above, formal training such as CARES workshops in Spanish could be game-changing for Spanish-speaking researchers. Another potential solution is for journals to be accepting bilingual or dual-language publications. This is one of the reasons we find Interacciones compelling for us, as it can break language barriers and provide valuable ways for researchers to not miss out on research. Others should follow. We also advocate for bilingual researchers to play a pivotal role as conduits between the English language and their communities so no one is left behind. This revision can be found in the sixth paragraph 6, highlighted in yellow, lines 62-70

Comment 5: *The argument regarding "structural exclusion" due to language barriers is compelling. Still, it would be strengthened by explicitly citing a few sources that discuss how access to academic knowledge in English impacts global scientific equity, as there is relevant literature that could enhance this section.*

Response: This is an excellent review point which has now been actioned. We have added more details to this section, particularly with the broader argument and divide that can be found between the Global North and South, including Latin America and other Spanish-speaking regions, which this language inequity can impact. The two papers cited make this clear and advocate for language equity in global health research as part of those efforts. This revision can be found in paragraph 5, highlighted in yellow, lines 49-58.

To keep within editorial word limits and maximum of 10 references, the following changes have also been made:

- The following four references have been removed to make space for the new four references: Isobel et al. (2024), Garcia-Zapata et al. (2024), Zahl et al. (2024), and Park et al. (2019). The first three are because they provide examples of publications in mental health areas, publications in Spanish, and inconclusive findings in psychology. Still, they do not add further to the argument; another reference is added there for readers. Parks' paper adds a reference to the idea of causal relationships in positivist research, yet this is something that readers may be familiar with due to their psychological background and may need less reinforcing in comparison to other areas of the manuscript that are more linked to the main argument of language and accessibility.
- After adding the highlights in yellow, as you can see, the manuscript had 1,050 words, 50 words more than the guidelines. We looked through the manuscript and made minor grammar/sentence length/structure changes to ensure the manuscript remains within the word count whilst simultaneously not losing any meaning.

I have made the exact same changes to the Spanish version of the manuscript, which I also attach for your reference. I note that the Spanish version is slightly longer in word count, yet we have translated so that it doesn't lose any meaning and it remains the same paper as the English one. Please let us know if this is something you would like to amend or if it would work as it currently stands.

We hope that the revised manuscript meets the expectations of the reviewers and yourself. Please do not hesitate to contact us if further clarifications or changes are required.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alejandro Arguelles Bullon & Andrew Harding
Division of Health Research, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK