

## Therapeutic Role of Digital Communication and Virtual Relationships in *Beautiful World, Where Are You?*

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Keywords	Abstract
Contemporary Fiction, Emotional Communication, Emotional Intelligence, Therapeutic Language.	<i>The study investigates how communication provides emotional therapy and how emotional connection leads to a stable relationship bond, as expressed in Sally Rooney's Beautiful World, Where Are You? (2021). Using a qualitative approach, this research employs close textual reading and thematic analysis to examine the characters' thought processes and emotional experiences as expressed through conversations and extended email exchanges. This research is based upon Emotional Communication Theory and Goleman's (2006) model of Emotional Intelligence. The findings of the research highlight that in Rooney's selected novel, language serves as a therapeutic space. Email exchanges enable the characters to regulate their emotions and to experience catharsis by expressing the feelings of loneliness, doubt, and existential anxiety. Moreover, this research explores how emotional communication shapes interpersonal relationships through digital communication. This research also contributes to the psychological dimension of communication by emphasizing the therapeutic and relational functions of language in contemporary fiction. Finally, this study concludes that language can be used as an emotional coping mechanism and a tool for building meaningful human connections.</i>

### INTRODUCTION

*Beautiful World, Where Are You?* (2021) is Sally Rooney's most celebrated novel, centered on the emotional lives of two friends. The story explores friendship, love, uncertainty, and social pressures in contemporary society. Alice, a successful novelist, loved Felix, while her friend Eileen, a literary magazine editor, was in a relationship with Simon. Both women were in toxic relationships, which increased their frustration and emotional imbalance. This situation prompted the girls to communicate more, and they began emailing each other because they were best friends who could share and understand each other's problems. Emails delve deeper into their emotional, social, and psychological struggles. Through their email correspondence, the novelist highlights the psychological and emotional experiences of Alice and Eileen, alongside external events.

By emphasising emotional communication, it strengthens relationships by connecting through

relatable common problems. People use words to say how they feel, ask for comfort, and connect with others on an emotional level. In fiction, written communication, such as emails, offers a medium for characters to disclose their vulnerabilities and seek comprehension of themselves and their surroundings. People can deal with their feelings through this kind of communication because language is an important way to convey and understand feelings. So, language seems to be a strong way to talk about and work through mental health issues. In the chosen work, the author emphasizes that people attain emotional clarity by expressing their fears in writing. This novel shows that words may turn personal experiences into a shared understanding. Their admissions, reassurances, and emotional reflections in emails help the characters deal with their concerns, doubts, and ambiguities about relationships and life in general.

Previous studies examined Rooney's work through multiple aspects, including social class, capitalism, and contemporary cultural critique. The present research examines how language functions as therapy for the character's emotional conflicts. This is the research gap, and the researcher investigates how the characters' communication reflects language's role in helping and healing.

### **Research Questions**

1. In what ways does the therapeutic role of words play a therapeutic role in the emotional communication (conversation) among the main characters?
2. What is the role of digital communication and language in building an emotional bond between two characters?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Emotional communication becomes a central theme in literature because it allows readers to understand the characters' thoughts, feelings, and psychological states. Emotional Communication Theory views communication as the transmission and interpretation of emotions through verbal and nonverbal channels. Rachmad (2022) described emotional communication as a process of sending and receiving emotionally charged messages that can be easily understood and responded to among individuals. It reinforced the idea that language functions as a tool of information and a medium through which emotions can be constructed and negotiated.

In literature, characters' internal struggles are revealed through either written or spoken communication. *Rooney's Beautiful World, Where Are You?* is a prime example of focusing on interpersonal relationships and emotional expression. Critics argue that this novel emphasizes relational dynamics and emotional interdependence. For instance, Carregal-Romero (2024) argues that the novel underscores the importance of emotional connection in relationships by reinforcing mutual understanding and emotional engagement. This perspective shows that emotional bonds are about human experience, not individualism.

Apart from this, narrative techniques also enhance emotional communication. The novel's third-person narration has been described as 'observational and empathetic,' giving readers access to characters' vulnerabilities and desires through their conversations and actions (Komatsu, 2021). It shows how psychological depth could be illustrated through literary form and communication.

As previous research emphasizes, Rooney's narrative structure, specifically extended written exchanges, enables deeper emotional reflection and expression among characters.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) provides a theoretical framework for readers to understand how individuals perceive, interpret, and manage emotions in interpersonal interactions. Here, Goleman's (2006) model is the best option, because it provides key components such as emotional awareness, empathy, and relationship management. By considering these elements, the emotional conversations and responses of characters in literary texts can be analyzed.

Previous studies mention that EI across different disciplines focuses on behavior and relationships. Kumari (2022) considers emotional intelligence a cognitive ability that enables individuals to understand and regulate their own and others' emotions, thereby influencing interpersonal interactions. Singh et al. (2022) presented the significance of emotional intelligence (EI) in assessing emotional and cognitive abilities in social and professional settings.

Apart from this, emotional intelligence is also examined for statistical outcomes, where emotional experience in texts is assessed using EI. For instance, Emotional Intelligence (EI) plays a key role in forming relational dynamics and emotional understanding in interpersonal relationships. Odame and Pandey (2025) explored relationships through emotional intelligence theory. The researcher used statistical analysis to explain how emotional intelligence influences conflict management styles and communication effectiveness. The findings of the research reveal that good emotional regulation and more constructive communication patterns are associated with higher emotional intelligence. It enhances the quality of human relationships and reduces their conflicts.

Moreover, studies such as Sfetcu (2023) and Aamir (2023) show that Emotional Intelligence's multidimensional nature is more pronounced when applied in educational, organizational behavior, and performance contexts. The significance of emotional awareness and relationship management is emphasized in these research works.

In line with this perspective, this research highlights that, in literary texts, applying emotional intelligence theory reveals how characters develop self-awareness and strengthen interpersonal relationships through communication. When language provides individuals a space to process their emotions and manage psychological challenges, it works as a therapeutic tool. In literature, expressive written communication serves as a mechanism for emotional release, self-reflection, and interpersonal understanding. The present study takes this perspective and examines how communication in the selected novel functions as emotional therapy.

Previous research works suggest that verbally expressed emotions can reduce misunderstandings, enhance self-awareness, and improve relationships. The present article also demonstrates the psychological benefits of written communication, such as introspection, dispute resolution, and self-improvement. It suggests, at a broader level, that language helps individuals clarify complex interpersonal dynamics and achieve emotional clarity. In addition, individuals process internal conflicts and strengthen social bonds through written emotional expression.

Additionally, extended emails between Alice and Eileen in the selected novel illustrate that conversation becomes a source of emotional exploration as the characters discuss their fears,

desires, and uncertainties while talking to each other. This type of communication shows that words are used as therapy, enabling characters to face emotional difficulties and seek reassurance from one another.

In previous research, it is seen that Emotional Intelligence Theory has been used in multiple contexts, but researchers have paid limited attention to the role of language as a therapeutic medium in literary texts. The key element of that study was to examine emotional intelligence in social, political, and organizational settings. On the other hand, the current study emphasises how emotional communication in Rooney's novel serves as psychological processing and relational support, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the intersection of language and emotion in digital communication as depicted in the literature.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This is a qualitative research grounded in an integrated theoretical framework of Emotional Communication Theory and Goleman's (2006) model of Emotional Intelligence (EI). This theoretical framework examines how others' feelings could be effectively perceived and understood through communication. Goleman (2006) structured two broad groups: social awareness and social cognition. Social awareness is about empathic accuracy, while social cognition includes self-presentation, influence, and concern. It is mainly applied to the emails exchanged between Alice and Eileen. It reveals the characters' thought processes and their struggles as depicted in *Beautiful World, Where Are You?* by Sally Rooney.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Emotional Communication Theory and Goleman's model of Emotional Intelligence (EI) provide a basis for the current study to explore how emotional expression, vulnerability, and relational development in *Beautiful World, Where Are You?* are conveyed through language. With the help of both frameworks, the researcher is enabled to do a comprehensive analysis of how characters reveal their inner experiences and shape their interpersonal relationships.

The Emotional Communication Theory analyzes how verbal interactions help the characters to convey, interpret, and negotiate emotions. In Rachmad's (2022) view, the transmission and reception of emotionally charged messages constitute emotional communication. They influence how people understand and respond to one another. Thus, through communication, we not only get information but it also deeply shapes our emotional connection and interpersonal relations. In literature, this theory analyzes characters' expressions and internal feelings, such as loneliness, anxiety, and desire, as they are expressed through dialogue and written correspondence. The focus of previous research was different when they used long passages from Rooney's narratives, but here the focus is to draw emotional space from them.

### **Methodological Framework**

Thematic analysis is used as a methodological framework in this research. Keeping in view Goleman's (2006) broader categories within the context of the novel, thematic analysis allows for exploring how the components of emotional intelligence appear in the language used by the novel's main characters in their interactions. Drawing on the general themes of communication, emotional connection, and emotional intelligence, the researchers explore how

language serves a therapeutic role and how emotional connection is exposed through words. Following close readings, three main themes were extracted. Emotional communication is basically revealed through the character's dialogues and emails, as seen in Rooney's work. Emails are full of emotional language that explores the characters' feelings and viewpoints. Emotional Communication Theory explains that interpersonal relations are sharpened through communication. The three emerging themes are: language as therapeutic and affective resource; building emotional connection through communication; and the role of digital communication in relationships.

Qualitative textual analysis, along with thematic analysis, provides a critical approach to examining how language is used to heal the characters psychologically and enable them to form healthy relationships.

### **Data Collection and Codification**

Based on the three themes, the excerpts from the letter were identified reflecting the chosen themes. Relevant parts of texts from the letters, sentences, phrases and words were identified and coded based on their alignment with emotional expression, therapeutic language use and development of emotional and relational connection.

Goleman's (2006) Emotional Intelligence Model provides insight into the psychological processes underlying emotional communication. Its main components are emotional awareness, empathy, and relationship management. They are used to understanding how people perceive and regulate emotions in social interactions. In literary analysis, these components become relevant when characters become familiar with their own emotional condition, their response to others' feelings, and their maintenance of interpersonal relationships. In prior research, the researchers used emotional intelligence theory to shape human behavior and social interaction. With its help, the individuals manage their relationships by responding to emotional challenges (Kumari, 2022; Singh et al., 2022).

The core concepts of the selected novel are empathy, emotional connection, and relational communication among characters. The characters understand each other emotionally because of empathy. Emotional vulnerabilities allow characters to express all that they feel, and this catharsis strengthens their emotional bonds. Previous research proved that catharsis enhances self-awareness and reduces misconceptions. This improves relationships.

The analysis based on this methodology provides a deeper understanding of how written communication processes emotional experiences, negotiates vulnerability, and constructs meaningful relationships. It clarifies the concept of how language performs as a therapeutic function by facilitating psychological reflection and interpersonal connection.

### **ANALYSIS**

**Language as Therapeutic and Affective Resource:** These letters are from *Beautiful World, Where Are You?*, exchanged between Alice and her close friend Eileen. These letters include many themes that combine personal and political themes, which also explore the challenges of modern relationships within today's social issues. Through the experiences of characters who deal with existential worries, it will be analyzed how language can affect and convey the exact

feelings of what people feel by employing Emotional Communication Theory. Her letters become a refuge, expressing thoughts and feelings that may be difficult to understand or express in everyday life. The findings of this study are that the letters that have been exchanged between Alice and Eileen and the language used in the novel serve as a therapeutic tool that allows them to express their feelings and emotions. The long letters between Eileen and Alice represent the most profound part of the novel in terms of emotional communication theory, revealing the therapeutic role of words in many ways. The purpose of the letters in the novel is not only for communication, but it is also a therapeutic written means that restores the balance of Eileen and Alice's feelings and supports each other through words that heal and release their repressed feelings.

**Building Emotional Connection through Communication:** In their letters, the alienation shows their feelings of disconnection with themselves and the world around them, reflecting their struggle to find meaning in their existence. In letter 1, Alice's existential despair is highlighted, suggesting that her letters are a means of supporting a sense of self in a world that seems increasingly meaningless. Alice's inner struggle makes her feel that she is of no worth, and this chaotic modernism is further intensifying it. Her words show the tension that is there between what she has and what she desires to have is intensifying the thought that she is caught in a jigsaw of modern world and she no longer belongs to it. Emails clarify her emotionally as they become the source of catharsis for her. The letters exchanged between the two main characters are a form of emotional communication in which the characters talk about several feelings, including pain, doubt, loneliness, and the desire for someone to understand them.

**The Role of Digital Communication in Relationships:** The analysis is carried out in a way that is aligned with the theoretical framework chosen for the research, corresponding to the third and significant theme that emerged from the novel.

By applying Emotional Communication Theory, which was established by Daniel Goleman, the study finds that the characters in Rooney's novel show elements of social awareness (empathy, emotional accuracy, and social cognition) and social facility (self-presentation, influence, and concern for others). This research supports Goleman's idea that (EI) is very important for understanding how people interact, showing that language can help with emotions and building relationships. The novel emphasizes that understanding of self and others needs courage to express feelings, whether they are positive feelings such as happiness and love, or negative feelings such as sadness or disappointment. Sally Rooney uses a narrative structure that involves the audience in the inner emotions of characters and uses silence and hesitation as methods of emotional communication, not just through speech.

## **DISCUSSION**

The results of the research indicate that emotional conversation is a significant mechanism that provides characters a chance of catharsis for improving their interpersonal relationships. The emails between Alice and her friend Eileen serve as a source of refuge for Eileen, as she expresses her thoughts and feelings that may be difficult to understand or express in everyday life. Thus, communication does not remain limited to information exchange only, but rather it becomes a psychological process for emotional regulation. It proves the therapeutic role of language as well.

Emotional Communication Theory views how emotions are transmitted, interpreted, and negotiated through language. Emails were a written platform where unsaid feelings were expressed through words, and these emotionally loaded messages transformed personal feelings into shared understanding. Thus, communication shapes the interpersonal dynamics (Rachmad, 2022). Written communication is a coping mechanism that helps them manage psychological distress and uncertainty.

It is the emotional connection that gives strength to characters' mutual relationships. Alice realizes that Eileen may feel guilty because of her words. So, she tries to influence her emotional response. Here, empathy is used not only to recognize the other person's feelings but also to manipulate them to carry out the expected outcome, which is to respond to emails as quickly as possible. Besides, the ability of insight and prediction into other feelings, as defined by Empathy Accuracy by Goleman, shows Alice's accurate understanding of how her words will affect Eileen, even if she uses them manipulatively. Emotional vulnerability moves to a deeper emotional connection. Social cognition is shown by Alice's sense of isolation and emotional disintegration, shaped by her awareness of social interactions and context. This is how emotional intelligence theory works within literary studies.

The therapeutic role of language is seen in the novel when Eileen describes feelings of emotional disconnection and failed relationships. Besides, Alice wrote how she continued her dull daily routine activities, which became mere duties carried out without any real interaction with others. Thus, through digital communication, they heal each other emotionally. Thus, language becomes a means of restoring emotional balance and fostering relational stability.

This study is multidisciplinary, as it connects literary analysis to psychology. It is not a mere thematic analysis; it explores how communication has psychological effects. It examines how characters' emotional development in the contemporary fiction works. Overall, results prove that this novel deals with emotional communication that is not only connected to psychological side but also take part in characters' emotional development. Interpersonal connections become strong because of emotional vulnerability. Thus, language's therapeutic role and emotional strength are the core ideas that sustain relationships and this is what we see in *Beautiful World, Where Are You?*

## CONCLUSION

The analysis of the study explores that written communication provides space to emotional communication, which becomes a therapy for those who were struggling with doubts, fears, and emotionally fragile relations. Thus, the therapeutic role of language allows them to express thoughts, face personal struggles, and seek understanding from one another. The emotionally vulnerable relationships turned into strong bonds.

This research supports Goleman's idea that (EI) is very important for understanding how people interact, showing that language can help with emotions and to build relationships. By integrating insights from previous research in the field of emotional communication and literature, which emphasizes that, language acts as a bridge for emotional connection. Communication is actually an emotional support that gives emotional clarity to characters. Thus, psychologically, when the

characters resolve their emotional conflict, they feel happy, and this is how language performs a therapeutic role.

Apart from this, it is the emotional vulnerability that strengthens human relationships. The utterance of fears, doubts, and guilt provides mental clarity, and it leads to empathetic communication, which is the basis of a sustainable relationship. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence, particularly empathy, emotional awareness, and relational management, is embedded in the characters' interactions and plays a key role in shaping their experiences.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of language as an emotional medium in literature. By shading lights on emotional communication theory and literary analysis, this research highlights the intricate relationship between language, emotion, and human connection, which leads to exploring EI in contemporary fiction. The exploration of emotional communication with the framework of Goleman's theory enriches our understanding of how literature can illustrate the complexities of human relationships and emotional experiences.

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