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Hello, I’m Catherine.

Hello, I’m Rob.

We both started with what is probably the best known greeting in English. And one of the first words English language students learn and that is Hello. So today, in 6 minutes English we’re digging a little deeper into the word of greeting and the fascinating history of hello.

Surprisingly, the word ‘hello’ is not as old as you might think. But when did it first appear in print in English? Was it:

A. in the 1890s

B. the 1950s

Or C in the 1820s

Well, I think English changes very quickly so I’m going to say B the 1950s. I will say’ hello again’ to' hello' a little later in the program.

First greetings, they can be a little bit of minefield, a subject full of unpredictable difficulties.

While in many places a handshake or a bow is normal, that also the tricky question of kisses and hugs.

Awkward! Should you kiss? How many times? And should your lips touch their cheek?

No, Rob. There’s definitely an air-kiss. Closer to cheek but don’t touch. Much safer.

Greetings are the subject of a new book by full of British diplomat Andy Scott called ‘One kiss or two’ in search of the perfect greeting.

Here it is on the BBC Radio Show ‘Words of mouth. Why is greeting so important?’

“Nearly the first moment of interaction we have with people in it. In those first moment, using them as a verbal and physical rituals that we have to get in a muddle about. But we can’t recognize each other whenever we're reaffirming a bond reason testing a bond in our relationship to each other. We’re signaling our intention toward each other despite that we might not necessary be conscious when we’re doing them."

Scott said we need to communicate our intension to each other and take knowledge our relationship.

Well that’s what greeting do. Once word he uses to mean relationship or connection is bond. We can reaffirm a bond which means we confirm them and make them stronger.

And we do it through rituals, patterns of behaviors that will do for the particular purpose. So there are phrases such as "Hello", "Good afternoon"," nice to meet you" and as well as physical rituals handshakes, bows and kisses.

Though he also says we sometimes want to check our bonds. We might want to check if our friendship is grown by offering something warmer than usual like a hug instead of a handshake. Now Scott acknowledges how difficult greeting can be using the very pretty slang phrase to get in a muddle. If you get in a muddle, you become confused or lost. You might get in a muddle if one person expects two kisses, the other expects only one.

Dr Scott does believe that the details don't really matter because another important purpose of greeting is to reduce tension. So if you got it wrong, just laugh about it.

OK, let's get back to the one word you really shoudn't get in a muddle about: Hello.

Let's see if the Dr Laura Right, a linguist from Cambridge University also speaking on the BBC "Word of mouth" Radio program.

Where the 'Hello' comes from? It starts as a distant hailing "I see you miles over there and I got to yell at you". It's not until the invention of Telephones we really get to use 'Hello' as a greeting to each other means maybe that it was initially used as a greeting. It was used more as an attention grabbing device. You are miles away, the line is about to be cut, I need to attract the attention, the friend as well. So everybody would call "hello" to each other as the long distant greeting form."

Laura says "hello" hasn't always meant "hello". Originally, it was just a shout to attract someone's attention. And we call this kind of sounding "Hailing".

The sound would very inform, they could sound like a "hallo" or a "hallua".

We'll continue this kind of hailing when telephone first appeared. People would keep repeating "hallo" or "hello" while they are waiting to be connected. And before long, this became actual way to greet somebody on the telephone. Anyway, before we say goodbye to Hello, let have the answer to today's question.

I asked when the word "hello" first appeared in print in English. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it was in 1826. Other spellings appeared before that.

You see, I would think English changed very quickly but not that quickly.

Not that quickly.

So before we go, let's have a look at today vocabulary again:

A minefield is something that full of uncertainty and even danger. This sense comes from the literature meaning a field full of explosive landmines.

And then we have air-kiss which is when you kiss the air beside someone's face instead of face itself like this: Mwoa!

And we had bond, a connection. There's a close bond between us, I think Rob.

... which is good because if I get in a muddle, you always very understanding. To get in a muddle means to become confused.

Ritual was another word. Rituals are certain behaviors that people perform in certain contexts. I have a morning ritual: brush my teeth, eat breakfast. I didn't say it was interesting Rob?

No, that's true. Finally, to hail is to greet someone loudly, especially from a distance. I hail my friend and I saw her at the airport.

And, that's it for this program. For more, find us on Facebook, Instargram and Youtube and of course our website bbclearningenglish.com. Bye!

Bye.