Text classification, within the field of Natural Language Processing (NLP), is a foundational task that involves categorizing text into organized groups. Essentially, it's the process of assigning tags or categories to text according to its content. This task is fundamental to many applications, such as spam detection in emails, sentiment analysis in social media posts, topic labeling for news articles, and organizing documents into thematic categories.

The process of text classification usually involves several key steps:

1. **Preprocessing**: Cleaning and preparing the text data for analysis. This might involve removing special characters, stop words (common words that don't add much meaning, like "the", "is", etc.), stemming (reducing words to their root form), and lemmatization (reducing words to their base or dictionary form).

2. **Feature Extraction**: Transforming text into a format that can be used by machine learning algorithms. This often involves converting text into numerical vectors or embeddings. Common techniques include Bag of Words (BoW), Term Frequency-Inverse Document Frequency (TF-IDF), and more recently, word embeddings like Word2Vec, GloVe, or language model embeddings from models like BERT.

3. **Model Training**: Using a dataset where the categories are already known (labeled data), a machine learning model is trained to recognize the patterns associated with each category. Algorithms used for text classification can range from simpler models like Naive Bayes and Logistic Regression to more complex models like Support Vector Machines (SVMs), Random Forests, and deep learning models (e.g., Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) and Recurrent Neural Networks (RNNs), including Long Short-Term Memory networks (LSTMs)).

4. **Evaluation**: Testing the model on a separate set of data to assess its performance. Common metrics for evaluating text classification models include accuracy, precision, recall, and F1 score, among others.

5. **Deployment**: Once trained and evaluated, the model can be deployed in a real-world application, where it can automatically classify new, unseen texts according to the learned categories.

Text classification has evolved significantly with the advent of deep learning, which has introduced more sophisticated models that can capture the nuanced semantics of text, leading to improvements in accuracy and the ability to handle a wider range of complex classification tasks.