

Reference resolution

Reference resolution, also known as anaphora resolution, is a task in natural language processing (NLP) that involves identifying and understanding the referents of words or phrases in a given context.

It aims to determine the intended meanings of pronouns, definite noun phrases, or other referring expressions by associating them with the appropriate entities or concepts mentioned earlier in the text.

The process of reference resolution is important for NLP applications such as information extraction, question answering, text summarization, and dialogue systems.

Resolving references accurately enables a system to comprehend the context and maintain a coherent understanding of the text.

There are different types of reference resolution that can be performed:

1. **Pronoun Resolution:** This involves determining the antecedent of a pronoun, i.e., the noun or noun phrase to which the pronoun refers.

For example, in the sentence "John went to the store. He bought some groceries," resolving the pronoun "He" would require identifying "John" as the antecedent.

2. **Definite Noun Phrase Resolution:** Definite noun phrases, such as "the cat" or "this book," refer to specific entities or concepts. Resolving these noun phrases involves identifying the intended referents based on the context.

For example, in the sentence "I saw the cat. It was sitting on the mat," resolving the noun phrase "It" would require linking it to "the cat."

3. **Bridging Reference Resolution:** Bridging references occur when a word or phrase refers to an entity or concept mentioned earlier but not directly adjacent to the reference. Resolving bridging references often involves identifying implicit connections or inferring additional information from the context.

For example, in the sentence "I bought a book. The author is famous," resolving the definite noun phrase "The author" would require linking it to "the book's author."

To perform reference resolution, NLP systems utilize various techniques, including rule-based approaches, machine learning models, and deep learning methods. These approaches typically involve