

## **“Like us on Facebook!” A case study on the use of the most popular social networking site by the top U.S. universities.**

As using social networking sites (SNS) has become a part of our daily lives, more and more institutions of higher education chose this medium to communicate with their current and prospective students. All of the top universities in the U.S. have their own profiles on the most popular SNS, i.e. Facebook, on which they report on the daily activities around the campuses. It has been reported in the literature that many students, as well as the members of faculty, use Facebook to enhance their experience with what universities have to offer. However, all available studies on the use of social media by students and faculty members are largely based on surveys and self-reports that state the reasons for using SNS. Thus, they do not show the whole picture of the use of SNS, as this approach does not take into account authentic data, which is the content of the university pages. That is why a linguistic analysis of the content of these pages might shed new light on the subject.

In this presentation the content of the Facebook pages of 3 top US universities, i.e. Harvard, Stanford, and University of Michigan are analyzed, in order to show the authentic use of SNS by the universities through the analysis of the type and content of university posts by means of graph-based methods.

In order to perform the analysis, ca. 2,000 recent posts (from most recent to ones dating back to the page foundation) from each page were downloaded. Then, the type of the post, i.e. a text update, a link, a photo, or a video, was assigned to each post to make a frequency list of what was the most common type of post on each page. Next, the remaining text of all text updates was combined into a corpus and analyzed by means of text network analysis, which analyzed the relations between the words in the corpus and created corresponding graphs, revealing the most important topics in the text.

Finally, by combining the results from both analyses, the authentic use of Facebook by these three universities is shown on straightforward graphs. As such, the method shown in the study might be used successfully on its own, but may also contribute to the methods used previously by researchers outside of the field of linguistics and may act as a validator for the results of these methods.