Classroom Discourse in Chinese EMI Programs: Implications for Teacher Competencies.
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Abstract:
English-medium instruction (EMI) as a curricular strategy for improving the quality of tertiary education and internationalising institutions of higher education has enjoyed strong top-down and bottom-up support in China. However, both policy recommendations and stakeholder support for EMI have not been based on solid research conducted in the Chinese context but on assumptions about various benefits and advantages of EMI. There are few empirical studies of what transpires in the EMI classroom that allow for a contextualised understanding of whether and how EMI facilitates or impedes content and language learning. This presentation shares the findings of a newly completed study on classroom discourse in 20 EMI lectures delivered at a Chinese university. Focusing on teacher questions and student responses in classroom interaction, the study has come up with findings which raise doubts about the likelihood for the focal university’s EMI programs to achieve the envisioned dual goal of facilitating subject learning and improving students’ English proficiency. The findings also have important implications for the competencies required of teachers to make EMI a truly effective and beneficial educational experience.