Communicative Functions of Spoken English

Socialising
➢ Using different modes of address
➢ Greeting and replying:
  ➢ Enquiring about health
  ➢ Leave taking
  ➢ Introducing
  ➢ Thanking
  ➢ Expressing good wishes

Exchanging Information
➢ Identifying
➢ Asking for/giving permission
➢ Describing
➢ Comparing and contrasting
➢ Narrating personal experiences
➢ Reporting what others did/said/asked or thought
➢ Seeking confirmation
➢ Enquiring about or expressing knowledge
➢ Enquiring about or expressing more complex opinions
➢ Agreeing or disagreeing
➢ Expressing shades/certainty or doubt
➢ Enquiring about/expressing needs
➢ Enquiring about/expressing likes, dislikes, preferences
➢ Enquiring about/expressing wishes
➢ Enquiring about/expressing intention
➢ Enquiring about/expressing ability
➢ Enquiring about/expressing hope and conditional possibilities
➢ Commenting
➢ Responding and reacting to requests for information, statements and comments
➢ Arguing fro/against
➢ Explaining: process, purpose, connection, cause and affect
➢ Persuading

Language of Discussion
➢ Analysing and interpreting
➢ Explaining cause and effect
➢ Expressing modality
➢ Concluding
➢ Predicting, hypothesising
➢ Expressing probability
➢ Expressing need, obligation

Expressing Attitudes
➢ Expressing
  o love
  o approval

asking for evaluation

Getting Things Done
➢ offering
➢ requesting
➢ suggesting
➢ making arrangements
➢ inviting
➢ reacting to offers, requests, invitations, suggestions
➢ reminding
➢ instructing
➢ advising
➢ persuading

Organising and Maintaining Communication
➢ Attracting attention
➢ Seeking confirmation
➢ Expressing lack of comprehension
➢ Asking for rephrasing or repetition
➢ Asking for explanation/translation
➢ Asking how to say something in the target language
➢ Using technology requiring speech e.g. phone
➢ Asking someone to explain what they have just said

As much classroom interaction revolves around responding to questions and to some extent, around asking questions, the following information may be useful

Thinking processes involved in answering different questions...
Closed questions
➢ Choose/respond with single word
➢ Answer yes or no
➢ Decide whether true or false
➢ Select from alternatives

Open questions
➢ List data/information

➢ Recall
  o details or facts
  o an event
➢ Analyse processes or events
➢ Synthesise
➢ Summarise
➢ Relate events (make connections)
➢ Brainstorm
  o to gather or collect information
  o to solve a problem
➢ Fantasise
➢ Interpret events
  o From a situational perspective
  o From a cultural perspective
  o From another person’s perspective
➢ Infer
➢ Compare similarities or differences
➢ Empathise
➢ Hypothesise or speculate
➢ Evaluate

1 Whilst these functions are those of spoken communicative English discourse, many if not most are also used in the written mode. The latter requires more formal and particular academic forms than does the former, and needs to be taught once Spoken English is established for these functions.