Book review: openMind Student's Book 1

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Rogers, M., Taylore-Knowles, J., and Taylore-Knowles, S. (2009).
***openMind.* Thailand: Macmillan.**

openMind Student's Book 1 belongs to a four-level series of American English. The book enables the students to learn English in such a way that they will be able to use it in real-life situations since the beginning of the course. The students participate constantly in pair or group activities that promote their interaction and help them gain self-confidence. The authors consider that language is a life skill, and its development will provide the students with opportunities to communicate and function effectively with other cultures in a globalized world.

In the Content section are presented the functions, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation that will be covered in each unit. Additionally, the competencies to developing are listed in the section: "In openMind 1 you will …" allowing the students to know since the beginning the abilities they will achieve per unit.

The four skills of language: speaking, listening, writing, and reading, are taught in an integrated way. This is, the students can practice writing and speaking in one single activity. Moreover, in order to help the students develop the language skills; openMind 1 makes use of "sub-skills" which are the different abilities that form a skill, such as the followings:

Skill:	Sub-skill:
Listening:	**a) understanding the main idea** **b) listening for specific information** **c) listening for numerical information**
Writing:	**a) understanding the mechanics** **b) writing simple sentences** **c) writing compound sentences** **d) sequencing and connecting ideas**
Reading:	**a) recognizing cognates** **b) reading for the main idea** **c) scanning for specific information**
Speaking:	**a) using polite language** **b) taking time to think** **c) showing interest** **d) asking for opinions** **e) using phone language**

With a number of photos and vivid colors, each unit begins with a Warm-Up activity that engages the students with the unit topic, getting them familiar with the grammar and vocabulary to come.

In openMind grammar is taught following the inductive approach, the students are expected to discover the grammar rules by themselves and to use them in further activities. The study of grammar is organized in four steps:

a) Language in context. The students work in a simple real-life activity using the target grammar.

b) Notice. The students do exercises that help them notice the grammar structure.

c) Practice. The students practice grammar in written controlled exercises.

d) Now you do it. The students participate in a communicative activity in which they practice the grammar structure learned using information of themselves, making it easier to remember.

Vocabulary teaching consists of a series of individual activities in which the students match pictures with their meaning, or words with their meanings, fill in the blanks, and so forth. In this type of activities the students do not use the new words to communicating but, understand their meanings. There are also activities to work in pairs, in which the students practice the new vocabulary in controlled activities such as: compare the answers, complete the phrases, and so on. Plus, the students have the opportunity to practice the new vocabulary by using it in the speaking activities of each unit.

The correct pronunciation of sound of the letters, word stress, sentences intonation, compound nouns, and so forth, come always with a brief explanation of where it is necessary to focus on the attention and by the audio.

The book includes activities to promote the speaking practice in several sections along the unit. As an example, in the Warm-Up section of unit 8 can be found the activity: "Work in pairs. Talk about the different things you like and don't like to buy." (p.77) More speaking activities can be found in the speaking section, the grammar section: Now you do it, language use, life skills, and so on. This reflects the course is designed to help the students be competent, by providing them with the necessary tools to communicate and function in real-life contexts.

The Language Wrap-Up section contains exercises of the vocabulary and grammar presented in the unit. It includes a score box, so that, the students can measure their knowledge and advances, resulting in a very practical task.

Well planned, modern, colorful, fun, and user friendly, could be some of the adjectives that best describe openMind Student's book 1, which, if used in the classroom can be an excellent tool for both teachers and students.