Benefits of Group Work
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Are you familiar with these maxims?
“The more, the merrier.” “Two heads are better than one.” “More hands make for lighter work.” These wise sayings refer to the potential groups which are more productive, creative and motivated than individuals on their own. Group works, whether in class or as an assignment and project can help students develop skills that are increasingly important in the professional world. Positive group experiences have shown to contribute student learning, retention and overall success.

Properly -structured group work can reinforce skills that are relevant to both group and individual ability. Through these, students are given the opportunities to break complex tasks into parts and steps, plan and manage time, and refine understanding through discussion and explanation. Stronger communication skills are developed along with collaborative efforts. Boussiada (2010) in her study “Enhancing Students’ Oral Proficiency through Cooperative Group Work” revealed that cooperative group work is the right technique for increasing learners’ language use and classroom oral participation which in turn affects learners’ oral proficiency. On the basis of these results, the hypothesis was confirmed in that students need to be provided with an adequate technique to develop the speaking skill needed and to create suitable situations where they can use the language without hesitation. This study has certainly its limitations, but its findings revealed interesting implications. Thus, future research should be done experimentally to test out the applicability of the findings to a larger population of subjects.

By facilitating group work, students have their own roles to play. There is a leader and all members are responsible to the output they have to produce. There is pool knowledge and skills brought by brainstorming. Members develop their own voice and perspective in relation to peers.
However, while the potential learning benefits of group work are significant, simply assigning group work is no guarantee that these goals will be achieved. In fact, group projects can – and often do – backfire badly when they are not designed, supervised, and assessed in a way that promotes meaningful teamwork and deep collaboration. By then teachers must be actively involved in monitoring their students whenever they make use of group work as a strategy.

Reference:
Boussiada, Soraya (2010) “Enhancing Students’ Oral Proficiency through Cooperative Group Work”