

# Can speaking a second language make you a better leader?

September 11, 2012

## *The Washington Post:*

One thing we definitely won't be hearing out of Mitt Romney's mouth in his much-anticipated acceptance speech at this week's convention is anything spoken in French. It's been the odd subject of primary-season ridicule, as well as attack ads from the left, that the candidate has — wait for it — *good* foreign language skills. *Quelle horreur!*

But a post from last week's Harvard Business Review blog got me thinking: Can speaking a foreign language make you a better leader?

The HBR piece reports on a recent conference on global leadership, and notes findings that “sensitivity to culture” or “cultural empathy” ranks first among all of the critical soft skills that make great global leaders. And the best way to achieve this is to learn other languages, which far fewer Americans than Europeans do. “Since every business professional around the world has (happily for them) been taught to communicate well in English, American business students simply — and arrogantly — assume that they don't need to bother with learning” a second language, writes HBR's Bronwyn Fryer.

Read the whole story: [\*The Washington Post\*](#)