

Words Poorly Used #48 — Rationale

In software engineering, we use a term, *overloaded*, to describe keywords that have different uses in different contexts. And we really should try to avoid *overloading* whenever possible — it has a synonym, *ambiguous*. It seems in a logical world there should be connections among words that seem to point in a similar direction. This brings to mind the cluster of words around *ration*. In fact, *rationale* is seldom and only accidentally useful in connection with *rational*. We have a ton of rationale for re-invading Iraq, but rational reasons for doing so are more scarce than hen's teeth. When we refer to our rationale for a behavior we only refer to an excuse, an exigency, an alternative that may be bested a thousand times over — its use does not infer the use of reason, it infers the selection of an alibi.

Kilgore