I like you may actually implicate *I love you*:
A reconsideration of some scalar implicatures
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Scalar implicature is a conversational implicature that is derived from a set of salient contrastive alternates linearly ordered in semantic/informational strength. It is dependent on the non-use of the semantically/informationally stronger alternatives in such a set. A typical example is the use of *some* implies *not many/not most/not all*.

But sometimes this is not the case. One typical example is that around half a century ago (that is, up to late 1980s/early 1990s), during courtship, a Chinese girl/boy tended to express her/his love to her/his boy/girlfriend by saying *wo xihuan ni* (I like you) rather than *wo ai ni* (I love you). This way of expressing romantic love was especially in vogue during Mao's ten-year brutal 'Cultural Revolution'. A second case is, as reported in Keenan (1976), in talking to her son, a Malagasy mother would use a general noun such as *olona* (person) to refer to her husband/the boy's father. Finally, in a face-threatening context in English (and other languages), a speaker may employ a semantically/informationally weaker scalar rather than a stronger alternative that he/she should have used (Bonnefon et al. 2009 for English). What all the three different cases show is this: there are at least some circumstances, under which the use of a semantically weaker scalar in a Horn scale may actually implicate its stronger alternative(s).

In this paper, I shall argue that contrary to some scholars, this type of 'abnormal' use is actually implicated in a classical way, with maximum theoretical parsimony, from Grice's co-operative principle and its component maxims of conversation. I shall then consider two neo-Gricean options to tackle it: (i) retain Horn scales, and change the implicature 'from weak to not stronger' to 'from weak to stronger', and (ii) abandon Horn scales, and treat e.g. <like, love> as forming an Atlas-Levinson scale and submit it to the I-principle.