Presuppositions and the *S*-Family Test

The persistence of presuppositions:

(1)   a. The theater will show the movie again on Thursday.   *S*
        b. The theater won't show the movie again on Thursday.   *not-S*
        c. Will the theater show the movie again on Thursday?   *S?*
        d. If the theater shows the movie again on Thursday,   *if-S*
           then Richard will be there.
        e. Perhaps the theater will show the movie again on Thursday. *perhaps-S*

        f. The theater will show the movie on Thursday.
   vs. g. The theater has shown the movie before.

For any sentence *S*, its *S*-family consists of the following:

        (i)   *S* (simple),
        (ii) *not-S* (denial),
        (iii) *S?* (yes-no question),
        (iv) *if-S* (antecedent of conditional sentence, and
        (v)   *perhaps-S* (possibility).

The hallmark characteristic of presuppositions is their persistence throughout the entire *S*-family:

   Sentence *S* **presupposes** sentence *P*: (i) an utterance of *S* allows us to infer that *P* is true, and (ii) an utterance of any other member of the *S*-family also allows us to infer that *P* is true.

   If *S* presupposes *P*, then so does every other member of the *S*-family (*not-S*, *S?*, etc. … this follows from the above definition).

Given that an utterance of *A* allows us to infer *B*,

   (i) does the truth of *A* guarantee the truth of *B*?
        (entailment: use our previous tests to answer this question)

   (ii) does the inference from *A* to *B* persist throughout the *A*-family?
        (presuppositon: check members of *A*-family to answer this question)