Exercise 9.4

In the following examples of semantic change, identify the kind of semantic change involved (widening, narrowing, metonymy and so on).

1. Spanish *cosa* ‘thing’ < Latin *causa* ‘matter, cause, question’.
2. Spanish *dinero* ‘money’ < Latin *dēnāriu* ‘coin (of a particular denomination).
3. Spanish *pariente* ‘relative’ < Old Spanish *pariente* ‘parent’.
4. Spanish *segar* ‘to reap (to cut grain, grass with a scythe)’ < Latin *secāre* ‘to cut’.
5. Old Spanish *cuñado* ‘relation by marriage’ shifted to ‘brother-in-law’ in Modern Spanish. (This Spanish word comes ultimately from Latin *cognātus* ‘blood-relation’.)
6. Mexican Spanish *muchacha*, formerly only ‘girl’, now has a primary meaning ‘maid, servant woman’ in some contexts.
7. Modern Spanish *siesta* ‘afternoon nap (rest period during the heat of the day)’ < Old Spanish *siesta* ‘midday heat’ (ultimately from Latin *sēsta* (*hōra*) ‘sixth (hour)’).
8. English *gay* ‘homosexual’ is the result of a recent semantic shift, where the original sense, ‘cheerful, lively’, has become secondary; the shift to the ‘homosexual’ sense perhaps came through other senses, ‘given to social pleasures, licentious’, which the word had.
9. English *to spill* formerly meant (from c. 1300 to 1600) ‘to destroy by depriving of life, to put to death, to slay, to kill’.
10. French *cuisse* ‘thigh’ < Latin *coxa* ‘hip’ (Spanish *cojo* ‘lame, crippled’ is thought also to be from Latin *coxa* ‘hip’).
12. Spanish *ciruela* ‘plum’ < Latin *prūna cēreola* ‘waxy plum’ (*prūna* ‘plum’ + *cēreola* ‘of wax’).
13. French *viande* ‘meat’ formerly meant ‘food’ in general. (This change parallels English *meat* which originally meant ‘food’.)
14. Spanish *depender* ‘to depend’ < Latin *dēpendere* ‘to hang’.
15. English *lousy* ‘worthless, bad’ < ‘infested with lice’.