



On the Role of Entrenchment and Conventionalization in the “Intransitivization” of Certain Verbs in Spanish: A Case Study of *Ahorrar* ‘to Save [Money/Resources]’

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Introduction¹

A number of transitive verbs in Spanish allow for an intransitive reading, where the direct object is implied (e.g. *afeitar(se)* ‘to shave [one’s face/beard]’, *ahorrar* ‘to save [money/resources]’, *beber/tomar* ‘to drink [alcohol]’, *tocar* ‘to play [music]’). Taking the historical development of *ahorrar* as an illustration, this study accounts for the availability of such readings through a historical socio-cognitive lens, wherein cognitive entrenchment – and, ultimately, conventionalization across a speech community – involves the incorporation of a specific direct object (chosen from the full range of possible direct objects that could be associated with a given verb) into the semasiological profile² of the transitive verb, resulting in a higher frequency of intransitive usage events. That is, the collocational relationship between the semantic domain expressed by the verb and the domain expressed by the direct object become increasingly ontologically salient, and its corresponding linguistic unit is conventionalized as a (partially, but primarily) intransitive verb.

According to Langacker, linguistic units are “structure[s] that a speaker has mastered quite thoroughly, to the extent that he can employ [them] in a largely automatic fashion, without having to focus his attention specifically on its individual parts or their arrangement” (57). Linguistic structures can gain unit status as a result of entrenchment, and, once their use spreads throughout a speech community, they become conventional(ized) linguistic units. Salience is an important component of the process of entrenchment. As Schmid put it, “[...] ontologically salient entities attract our attention more frequently than nonsalient ones. As a result, cognitive events related to the processing of ontologically salient entities will occur more frequently and lead to an earlier entrenchment of corresponding cognitive units, or concepts” (120). I will argue below that the gradual development of an economically viable middle class throughout the Spanish

¹ Many thanks to the anonymous reviewers, whose helpful comments improved this article.

² Entrenchment is the process through which cognitive processing routines are embedded in an individual’s memory. A semasiological profile is the set of meanings associated with a given word, in contrast to an onomasiological profile, which is the set of words associated with a given meaning (see Korfhagen, *Social and cognitive factors* 8-45 for a more thorough discussion).

empire (beginning in the sixteenth century), combined with a series of economic crises, contributed to the increased salience of money and resources as things that could feasibly be saved up for the future, and thereby led to the entrenchment and conventionalization of SAVE MONEY/RESOURCES³ as the prototypical meaning of *ahorrar*. As additional supporting evidence for the degree to which MONEY has become centralized within the semasiological profile, I will do an analysis of the frequency of intransitive uses of the verb (e.g. *necesitamos ahorrar* ‘we need to save’ [with an implied direct object, usually money or resources]). I will focus on the Iberian Peninsula, but parallel economic and linguistic developments occurred in the former colonies in the Americas, before and after their independence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The notion that changes in economic structure can have an influence on the way in which lexical items are used by speakers and writers may seem rather intuitive (new lexical items are often borrowed or coined to meet the needs of changing currencies and the like). The task here, however, is to examine *how* the economic influence took hold in the cognitive experience of individuals and subsequently, through social interaction, promoted linguistic change within the speech community in question.

Of parallel interest is the fact that the sense ‘free an enslaved person/prisoner’ began its fall into obsolescence well before the decline and abolition of slavery in the Spanish empire.⁴ Thus, the influence of social factors in the (near) disappearance of that sense are less clear. On the one hand, the decline and abolition of slavery probably did contribute—to some extent—to the decline in frequency of the sense ‘free an enslaved person’, given that the real-world referent was lost (i.e. there were no longer enslaved people to be freed), but, of course, speakers still talk about freeing enslaved people. On the other hand, even if we could establish that the sense ‘free an enslaved person’ *did* drastically decline in frequency due to the abolition of slavery, there is no socially based reason why ‘free a prisoner’ would decline as well.

Etymology and Attested Senses

The first step for this part of the study involved a thorough investigation of the etymology of *ahorrar* using a number of dictionaries and other resources. According to the available evidence, the verb derives from an adjective that was borrowed from Arabic at some point in the medieval period: Ar. *hurr* ‘free’ > Sp. *forro/horro* ‘freed person’. Note the orthographic variation *f- ~ h-*, both of which probably represented a glottal pronunciation [h], borrowed from Arabic along with the word itself. This is an example of the well-documented (morpheme-initial) /f-/ > /h-/ > Ø process in Castilian Romance/Spanish (e.g. Penny 90-4).

The ‘first documentation’ of the adjective, according to Corominas and Pascual, is from the eleventh century (1074) in the *doc. de San Salvador del Moral*; this is how it appears in the *Corpus Diacrónico del Español* (Real Academia Española, *Corpus*):

³ I use capitalization to indicate conceptual domains, or conceptualizations; capitalized forms are meant to be understood as abstract approximations of dynamic, negotiated, ‘encyclopedic’ meaning structures, and the use of words to represent them is a matter of methodological convenience. Thus, for example, MONEY is not meant to invoke the word money *per se*, nor a simple ‘dictionary definition’ of money, but rather the entire body of knowledge and experience related to what we conventionally refer to as money (see Korfhagen, *Social and cognitive factors* 8-45 for a more thorough discussion).

⁴ Slavery was legally abolished in Spain in 1811, and at various other times in the current (at that time) and former colonies during the nineteenth century.

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- (1) Mançebo **forro** qui homicidium fecerit et casam non habuerit pectet ad palacium medietatem de suo peguiar et non hereditatem
(*Fueros de la villa de Palenzuela*, anonymous, eleventh century)

(A **freed** man who commits homicide and does not have a house will pay as a fine to the palace one half of his cultivated land and he will not receive an inheritance)⁵

This example shows an early definition of the term:

- (2) Todos aquellos que son librados de servidumbre de sus señores [...] llaman en esta tierra **forros**.
(*Siete Partidas*, thirteenth century)

(All who are freed from servitude [...] are called **forros** in this land.)

The first documentation of the verb form is from the thirteenth century (c.1219, according to Corominas and Pascual):⁶

- (3) [§108] Qui so moro tornare cristiano e non oviere fijos, herede⁷ su senno[r], sy por Dios **se⁸ aforrare** [...]
(*Fuero de Guadalajara*, thirteenth century)

([The debt of a] moor who converts to Christianity and does not have children is inherited by his master, if by God’s grace [the moor] **is freed** [...])⁹

Already within several years of the first extant documentation, the verb shows some minor polysemy. The *NDHE* (Real Academia Española, *Nuevo diccionario*) includes example 3 under the entry “tr. Dar libertad a un esclavo o a un prisionero” (Give freedom to an enslaved person or prisoner), and example 4, ostensibly from six years later, under the entry “tr. Eximir de un impuesto o tributo. El compl. dir. es el impuesto.” (Exempt from a tax or tribute. The direct object is the tax). Of course, the semantic leap from FREE to EXEMPT is not a great one; the latter could easily be paraphrased as FREE FROM.

⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

⁶ The *Nuevo diccionario histórico del español* (Real Academia Española, *Nuevo diccionario*) dates the passage to 1219, while Müller (s.v. *ahorrar*) gives a noncommittal “[s XIII]”. The three extant manuscripts appear to have been copied in the fifteenth or sixteenth century (Faulhaber; Martín Prieto 157-8).

⁷ The pronoun *lo* apparently refers to the *debdo* ‘debt’ mentioned two sections earlier (§106): “Tod ome que heredare de omne muerto poco o mucho, [que el heredor] pague el debdo, e sy no lo quisiere pagar, no herede” (Any man who inherits little or much from a deceased man, [the heir must] pay the [deceased man’s] debt, and if he does not wish to pay, he may not inherit). Text from Keniston (17). See also Martín Prieto (212).

⁸ Müller (s.v. *ahorrar*) notes a variant form in Ms. E: “**lo aforrare**”.

⁹ My interpretation of the passage coincides with that of Martín Prieto (176): “Aun abolida, desde el fuero anterior, la mañería, subsiste una forma residual de la misma, relacionada con la herencia de los bienes del converso manumitido, a la que tiene derecho su antiguo dueño, en ausencia de herederos cristianos (§108)” (Although *mañería* [i.e. the right of a king or lord to inherit the goods of a deceased person, in spite of the existence of living heirs] had been abolished in the preceding *fuero*, a residual form lingers, related to the inheritance of the goods of manumitted converts, to which that person’s former owner had a right, in the absence of Christian heirs (§108)).

- (4) Jo, don Gonzaluo Pérez, señor de Molyña, atrego & prendo en comenda & en my enpara todas las cosas que son & que perteçen en la casa de la mercet de Uclés de Conca & de Uélamo; et **afórroles** todo el portadgo de toda cosa [...]

(I, Don Gonzalvo Pérez, lord of Molyña, grant and entrust to my protection all of the things that are and that pertain to the house of the will of Ucles de Conca and of Uélamo; and I **exempt** them from all of the costs of all things [...])

A noteworthy early example is found in *Bocados de oro* (written in 1250), an anonymous translation of the Arabic text entitled *Mukhtar al-hikam*, itself an eleventh-century work by Abu al-Wafa al-Mubashshir ibn Fatik, also known as Bonium of Persia (Faulhaber):

- (5) E estudo en cativerio grant tiempo; e después **aforraron-lo** (Müller s.v. *ahorrar*)

(He was in captivity for a long time; then they **freed him**)

It is also noteworthy that the first extant documentation of the verb comes from a city which was founded by Arabic speakers (Guadalajara), although the first example of the adjective from which the verb derives (example 1) comes from Palenzuela, on the other side of Castile, in present-day Palencia. This suggests that the word(s) most likely entered Ibero-Romance well before the date of first documentation.

The earliest attestation of the *-h-* spelling that I can find is from the fourteenth century, in the anonymous work *Libro del cavallero Çifar* (ostensibly from between the years 1300 and 1305):

- (6) Verné -dixo el Cavallero Amigo-, si me dieren vagar. Pero dígovos que si no lo oviessse prometido a la Infanta, que yo no fuese allá, que paréceme que vos tenéis por embargado conmigo y queréis **ahorrar** de mí [...]

(I will come – said the friendly *Cavallero* – if you give me time. But I will tell you that if I had not promised the *Infanta* that I would do so, I would not go there, because it seems to me that you have a problem with me and you want to **escape** from me [...])

Attestations from Searchable Databases

This part of the study relies on data culled from Davies and the *Corpus Diacrónico del Español* (Real Academia, *Corpus Diacrónico*). The three principal semantic categories were found in the analysis of the data, coinciding with what we have already seen, and which are considered here to be semasiological prototypes of *ahorrar* at different times throughout the eight centuries covered by the corpus: FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON/PRISONER, AVOID A DIFFICULTY, and SAVE MONEY/RESOURCES. The review here focuses on examples of these three categories, which are presented in table form in the summary further along. Discussion of the factors involved in the transitions between the prototypes will follow.

The first prototypical meaning of *ahorrar*, as found in Davies, was FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON/PRISONER. In fact, all of the 144 tokens found in the corpus for the thirteenth century

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pointed to this meaning, and came from a single text (the *Siete Partidas*).¹⁰ Representative examples are 7-9. These are followed, in diachronic order, by additional examples.

In the *Siete Partidas*, we see many examples in which the verb is used transitively, with explicit direct object/patients that refer to enslaved people or servants (typically *sieruos*):

- (7) Patronus llaman en latin al señor que **aforra** su sieruo por quel torna como de nueuo en estado de onbre

(*Patronus* is used in Latin/Romance to refer to a man who **frees his servant**, so that he returns to a state of manhood)¹¹

- (8) Ley nouena porque razones puede el señor tornar a seruidunbre aquel que ouiese **aforrado**. Señores y ha algunos que **aforran** sus sieruos tan sola mente por su buena voluntad queriendo les hazer bien & merçed no tomando preçio ninguno dellos. E otros y ha quelos **aforran** por preçio que reciben: o por quelos mando **aforrar** su señor en su testamento al heredero que estableçio enel. E porende dezimos que si el señor **aforra** su sieruo por su buena voluntad no tomando preçio: o si reçibiese preçio del sieruo mismo que lo da por si [...]

(Law nine: reasons for which a man can return to servitude a person whom he had **freed**. Some masters **free** their servants simply because of their good will, wanting to do them a favor and show them mercy, without taking any payment in exchange. And others **free** them for a payment that they receive: because the master ordered his heir to **free** them in his will. For that reason we say that if the master frees his servant on good will, without taking a payment: or if he received a payment from the servant himself by his own free will [...])

Example 8 indicates that the agent, that is, the person doing the freeing, could receive a *preçio* for his action. While it may not be clear whether the *preçio* received for the *aforramiento* is necessarily money (it could be livestock or other resources), example 9 shows a clear case in which the agent receives money in exchange for the action:

- (9) Ley terçera por quales razones pueden las mugeres ser fiadores por otri. Muger diximos enla ley ante desta que no puede entrar la muger fiador por otri. Por razones ya por quello podrian fazer. La primera es quando fiase alguno por razon de libertad. E esto seria como si alguno quisiese **aforar** su sieruo por dineros & le entrase alguna muger fiador por los dineros del aforamiento. La segunda es si fiase aotri por razon de dote.¹²

(Law three: reasons for which women can be money lenders. In the preceding law we said that women cannot be money lenders, but here we will give exceptions to this law. The first is when she lends money in order to grant freedom. This would be if a master wanted to **free** his servant for money and a woman intervened to provide the money for the manumission. The second is if she lends money as a dowry.)

¹⁰ Müller (s.v. *ahorrar*) cites several additional texts (e.g. *Foro Real*, *Espéculo*, *Crónica General*, *General Estoria*, and the above-mentioned *Bocados de oro* and *Fuero de Guadalajara*).

¹¹ See Tejedó-Herrero and Cano Aguilar for discussion regarding the translation of the word *latín*.

¹² The spelling *-r-* instead of *-rr-* is a common variant found throughout the corpus.

This point will be relevant to the discussion below regarding the subsequent shifts in prototypical meaning. I will argue that even though both the thirteenth-century prototypical meaning and the current, twenty-first century prototype involve the domain MONEY/RESOURCES, the true underlying domain that links the two is actually REMOVE FROM ACTION/SET ASIDE. I base this argument, in part, on the presence of the intervening prototype AVOID A DIFFICULTY, which has no consistent relationship with the domain MONEY/RESOURCES.

In the fourteenth century, we see an example in which the direct object/patients seem to be prisoners of war, rather than enslaved people or servants:

- (10) Otro dia sallio el çid de castejon & fuesse henares arriba. ca non qujso fincar alli. por non fazer pesar al Rey don alfonso Su sseñor / Pero non quiso dexar el castillo assi desenparado mas **ahorro** çientos moros con sus mugeres & dexolos de Su mano en el castillo
(*Crónica de veinte reyes*, anonymous, fourteenth century)

(The Cid left Castellón and went up toward [the river] Henares, because he did not want to stay there, in order to not disappoint his master, King Alfonso. But he did not want to leave the castle unprotected, so he **freed** hundreds of moors with their women and he left them in the castle)

In late fifteenth-century works by Fernández de Santaella (examples 11 and 12) and Nebrija (example 13) we see lexicographical entries which continue the transmission of FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON/PRISONER, but which appear to already be somewhat antiquated, at least if we trust the data from Davies, and which would not be surprising given the typical tendency of lexicographers to be rather conservative.¹³

- (11) Manumissus. sa. sum. de manumitto. tis. libertado o **ahorrado** dela seruidumbre
(*Vocabulario eclesiástico*, Rodrigo Fernández de Santaella, 1499)

(Manumitted: freed or **ahorrado** from servitude)

- (12) Manumitto. tis. si. ssum.ijj. conjuga. **ahorrar** o libertar. S. Augustinus
(*Vocabulario eclesiástico*, Rodrigo Fernández de Santaella, 1499)

(Manumitted: **ahorrar** or free [as used by] Saint Augustine)

- (13) Manumitto. is. si. por **ahorrar** al siervo.a.i. Manumissio. onis. por aquel **ahorramiento**
(*Dictionarium latino-hispanicum*, Antonio de Nebrija, 1492)

(Manumitted: **free** an enslaved person; Manumission: the act of **freeing** [an enslaved person])

Example 11 is the earliest example with the preposition *de* found in the corpus related to the semantic domain FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON, and represents the early stages of the long process of intransitivization of the verb, which remains incomplete.¹⁴

¹³ Only seven tokens are found with that meaning in the fifteenth century, all from lexicographical sources.

¹⁴ The appearance of the preposition can be found in the intermediate stage of intransitivization (between clear transitivity and intransitivity) of other verbs, for example *gustare* 'to taste' (transitive) > *gustar de* 'to like [of]' > *gustar* 'to be pleasing' (intransitive). English *like* took the opposite route (i.e. transitivity): *The book liketh me* (intransitive)

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The second prototypical meaning of *ahorrar*, as found in Davies, was AVOID A DIFFICULTY. The first tokens appear in the sixteenth century:

- (14) Mayormente que antes el cambio se inventó y se ejercita para **ahorrar de peligros**, y es contra su naturaleza correr riesgo el que los da aquí para que se los den en otra parte
(*Summa de tratos y contratos*, Tomás de Mercado, 1545)

(Principally that beforehand the change was invented and is applied in order to **avoid dangers**, and taking risks is against the nature of he who gives them here so that they are given elsewhere)

- (15) [...] me detuve allí algunos días esperando el sacerdote señalado, que si viniera me fuera con él por **ahorrar de tanto despoblado y riesgo** de algunos indios de guerra [...] (La descripción de las Indias, Reginaldo de Lizárraga, 1569)

([...] I stopped there for a few days, waiting for the appointed priest, with whom I was supposed to leave – if he arrived – in order to **avoid open areas and risks** from some war-faring Indians [...])

- (16) Esta calzada han tenido y tienen hoy en gran veneración los indios de aquella comarca, así porque el mismo Inca trabajó en la obra como por el provecho que sienten de pasar por ella, porque **ahorran mucho camino y trabajo** que antes tenían para descabezar la ciénaga por la una parte o por la otra.

(*Comentarios reales*, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, 1578)

(The Indians of this region have held – and still hold – this road in great veneration, because the same Incas built it and because of the benefit that they gain by using it, because they **avoid a great amount of travelling and work** that they used to deal with in order to clear the swamp.)

Again, we see the appearance of the preposition *de*, but in a different sense than in example 11. In example 11, the prepositional phrase indicates what the enslaved person or servant was freed from (*seruidumbre* ‘servitude’), while in examples 14 and 15 it indicates what is being avoided (*peligros* ‘dangers’, *despoblado* ‘open areas’, *riesgo* ‘risks’). Clearly, there is a semantic kinship between these prepositional complements – in the sense that they are undesirable, even though the general meanings are different (in that being freed from servitude involves having been in a state of servitude, while avoiding dangers does not necessarily involve having been in danger).

In the seventeenth (examples 17 and 18), eighteenth (example 19), nineteenth (example 20) and twentieth (example 21) centuries, there are more examples that lack the preposition, and the direct object/patients are viewed as problematic and to be avoided:¹⁵

- (17) [...] y si vuesa merced quiere **ahorrar camino** y ponerse con facilidad en el de su salvación, véngase conmigo

(*Don Quijote*, Miguel de Cervantes, 1605)

> I like of the book > I like the book (transitive). While it is noteworthy as evidence that the process was underway, this is a morphosyntactic phenomenon which falls outside the cognitive/semantic scope of the present study.

¹⁵ Note that in my English-language glosses I chose the lexical item *save*, rather than *avoid*. Nevertheless, in these cases, *save* corresponds to the semantic domain AVOID.

([...] and if you want to **save on your trip** and make your salvation easier, come with me)¹⁶

- (18) La tierra es de temple caliente, de mucha montaña, y arboleda, y los que van a la provincia de Nicaragua suelen atravesar esta bahía en canoas de los indios de la isla; con que **ahorran muchas leguas y cansancio** [...]

(*Compendio y descripción de las Indias Occidentales*, Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa, 1600)

(The land is of a warm nature, very mountainous, and with many trees, and those who go to the province of Nicaragua tend to cross this bay in the canoes of the Indians of the island; in that way they **save many leagues and weariness** [...])

- (19) Menos sensible me hubiera sido la muerte, si hubiese podido con ella **ahorrar a mi Gabriela esa cruel herida**

(*Eusebio*, Pedro Montengón, 1784)

(The death would have hurt me less if I had been able to use it to **save my Gabriella** [from] **that cruel injury**)

- (20) Y **se** habría **ahorrado** el señor de la Revilla **mucho mal camino y muchos tropiezos** si hubiese comenzado por aquí [...]

(*La ciencia española: polémicas, indicaciones y proyectos*, Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, 1884)

(And the man from Revilla would have **saved himself a difficult journey and many hardships** if he had begun from here [...])

- (21) Antes que nada, me disculpo por no escribirte inmediatamente, con lo cual **te** hubiera **ahorrado la angustia** con la que me acabas de hablar hace unas horas

(*El oficio del abuelo*, Erika Mergruen, 1999)

(First of all, I apologize for not immediately writing you, which would have **saved you the anguish** with which you just called me a few hours ago)

Additional examples of the expanded variety of objects/patients found in the corpus for this period, from the sixteenth century to the present, include *cuernos* 'lit. horns [refers to spousal infidelity]', *disgustos* 'displeasures', *dolor de cabeza* 'headache', *enfado* 'anger', *enojo* 'anger', *guerras* 'wars', *pecado* 'sin', *peligro* 'danger', *pesadumbre* 'grief', *quebranto* 'sadness', *quejas* 'complaints', *riesgo* 'risk', *sangre* 'blood [bleeding]', and *tormento* 'torment'. Notably, all of these objects/patients represent things that people tend to avoid, in contrast to what we will see below.

The third prototypical meaning of *ahorrar*, as found in Davies, was (and still is) SAVE MONEY/RESOURCES. As with the meaning AVOID A DIFFICULTY, the first century with a significant number of tokens with this meaning (57) was the sixteenth century, but I did find one token from the *Textos y documentos completos de Cristóbal Colón*, which Davies puts in the fifteenth:

¹⁶ My translation for example 17 could be paraphrased as "and if you want to avoid the inconveniences associated with traveling..."

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- (22) [...] allende de las otras cosas que son para los mantenimientos comunes e de la botica, çapatos e cueros para los mandar fazer, camisas comunes e de otras, jubones, lienços, sayos, calças, paños para vestir en razonables precios e otras cosas, como son conservas, que son fuera de ración e para conservación de la salud; las cuales cosas toda la gente de acá recibirá de grado en descuento de su sueldo, e si allí esto se mercase por ministros leales e que mirasen al servicio de Sus Altezas, **se ahorraría algo** [...]

([...] in addition to the other things that are used for common maintenance and for the commissary, shoes and leather to make them, common shirts, doublets, linens, tunics, breeches, cloth for dressing at reasonable prices and other things, as they are preserved, that are outside of the ration and used for health maintenance; everyone would receive such things voluntarily as a discount from their salary, and if this were overseen by loyal ministers who faithfully served their superiors, some [amount of money/resources] would be saved [...])

From the sixteenth century:

- (23) ...porque si no tuviesen criados, de la despensa **ahorrarían muchos dineros**, y del corazón quitarían muchos cuidados
(*Libro primero de las epístolas familiares*, Antonio de Guevara, 1513)

(...because if they did not have children, they would save a lot of money from their expenses, and they would remove many worries from their hearts)

Here we see that the direct object/patient is not something to be avoided. Additional examples of this come from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries (examples 24-27, respectively).

- (24) Yo te juro que hubieras **ahorrado muchos ducados** si te hubieras encomendado a mí porque no soy nada amiga de dineros.
(*Historia de la vida del Buscón*, Francisco de Quevedo, 1612)

(I assure you that you would have saved a lot of money if you had entrusted yourself to me because I am by no means a friend of money.)

- (25) [...] las innumerables máquinas, que han inventado, e inventan, con que **ahorran mucho tiempo, trabajo, y dinero** en la ejecución de varias operaciones necesarias [...]
(*Cartas eruditas y curiosas*, Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, 1742)

([...] the innumerable machines that they have invented, and keep inventing, with which they save a lot of time, work, and money in the execution of various necessary operations [...])

- (26) ¿Qué trabajador no se halla en estado de **ahorrar cinco céntimos** diarios? ¡Cinco céntimos diarios! Son seis reales al mes; es la comida de un día, de día y medio [...]
(*El pauperismo*, Concepción Arenal, 1856)

(What worker does not find himself in a state of saving five cents per day? Five cents per day! That is six *reales* per month; it is enough food for a day, for a day and a half [...])

- (27) [...] una caja de lata con un poco de café y un poco de azúcar, todo revuelto: ahorra tiempo; echas el café junto con el azúcar [...]

(*Hijo de ladrón*, Manuel Rojas, 1951)

([...] a tin can with a little coffee and a little sugar, all mixed together: it saves time; you throw the coffee in along with the sugar [...])

It is, of course, possible to interpret *trabajo* in the eighteenth-century example (25) as something to be avoided, but its juxtaposition with *dinero* certainly seems to change the meaning. It appears, rather, that the example reflects the beginnings of the period of transition between the two prototypical meanings (which was not complete until the twentieth century). That is, the example could show a blend of the two meanings – AVOID A DIFFICULTY and SAVE MONEY/RESOURCES – or, alternatively, ‘work’ could also be seen as a resource of sorts, in that it is useful for procuring other resources (principally, money).

Also noteworthy is this early seventeenth-century example, which shows the use of other verbs (*rescatarse* and *libertarse*) to mean FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON (in this case reflexively), alongside an intransitive use of *ahorrar* to mean SAVE MONEY:

- (28) [...] todas las costas de la isla son puertos, mas no en todas hay poblaciones; las que tienen los ingleses en aquellas mas capaces esclavos que tienen porque, no faltandoles en que trabajar, se aumenta el precio de estos; y corriendo la plata con abundancia entre todos, tienen no solo para vestirse, quedar proveidos de ropa y lo necesario hasta otra armada, pero aun con dinero de sobre; y, assi, en estas ocasiones, se rescatan y libertan muchos esclavos con lo que ahorran despues de haver pagado sus jornales y haverse mantenido.

(*Viaje a la América meridional*, Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, 1608)

([...] all of the coasts of the island are ports, but not all of them are settlements; the English ones have the most capable enslaved people because, not lacking work to do, their price increases; and given the abundance of silver among them, they have enough not only to dress, be well-provided with clothing, and to even have enough to form another navy, but even with money left over; and, in that way, on these occasions, many enslaved people free themselves with what they save after having paid their daily wages and maintained themselves.)

As I will discuss further along, examples like this reflect the fact that the abolition of slavery does not seem to have had a great impact on the loss of the meaning FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON; this one comes from a text published two centuries before slavery was abolished in the Spanish empire.

Table 1 presents a summary of the number of tokens and frequency (in words per million [wpm]) of *ahorrar*, organized vertically by the meaning of the tokens and horizontally by the century in which they were found. The underlined numbers represent the raw number of tokens, and the numbers in parentheses represent the frequencies. The darkened boxes represent the meanings with the largest number of tokens (and, consequently, the highest frequency) within a given century, and therefore likely the prototypical meaning of the lexical item during that period.

| Century Meaning | 13th | 14th | 15th | 16th | 17th | 18th | 19th | 20th | Totals |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON/ PRISONER | <u>144</u> (21.44) | <u>4</u> (1.50) | <u>7</u> (0.86) | <u>1</u> (0.01) | <u>1</u> (0.08) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 157 |
| AVOID A DIFFICULTY | 0 | 0 | 0 | <u>86</u> (5.05) | <u>113</u> (9.15) | <u>82</u> (8.35) | <u>179</u> (9.28) | <u>57</u> (2.50) | 517 |
| SAVE MONEY/ RESOURCES | 0 | 0 | <u>1</u> (0.12) | <u>57</u> (3.35) | <u>69</u> (5.59) | <u>45</u> (4.58) | <u>125</u> (6.48) | <u>193</u> (8.46) | 490 |
| Other/Unclear | 0 | <u>2</u> (0.7) | <u>7</u> (0.86) | <u>6</u> (0.35) | <u>6</u> (0.49) | <u>7</u> (0.71) | <u>11</u> (0.57) | <u>3</u> (0.13) | 42 |
| Totals | 144 | 6 | 15 | 150 | 189 | 134 | 315 | 253 | 1206 |

Table 1. Number of tokens and frequency (in words per million) of *ahorrar* by century (from Davies).

As Table 1 shows, FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON/PRISONER was likely the prototypical meaning during the thirteenth century, the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are inconclusive due to lack of data, AVOID A DIFFICULTY was the prototypical meaning from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, and SAVE MONEY/RESOURCES is the current prototypical meaning. It is also clear from the table that the lexical item is, and has been, somewhat polysemous at least since the sixteenth century.¹⁷ This fact will moderate some of the conclusions to follow, since it is not a clear-cut case of the full loss of polysemy, but rather a tendency in that direction.

Intervening Social and Cognitive Factors

It is clear that the domain MONEY was integrated into the semasiological profile of *ahorrar* from the beginning of its use, in the context of freeing enslaved people and prisoners.¹⁸ Obviously, the sale of enslaved people (and the ransoming of prisoners) involved an exchange of money (or goods). But it is worth pointing out that, prior to the word’s entry into the Ibero-Romance lexicon, the Roman legal code – the *Corpus Juris Civilis* – included provisions for enslaved people to earn a modest stipend, called a *peculium*, which “formed the slave’s working capital, derived from gifts, a portion of the wages a slave might earn from working outside the home, tips from guests, or savings from the slave’s allowance” (Phillips 127). In principle, enslaved people could use this money to purchase their own or another person’s freedom. Similar allowances were made during the Visigothic period and under Muslim law in the early medieval period (Phillips 128-9). The evidence suggests that it was in this context that *ahorrar* was first used by Romance speakers. The practice of allowing the enslaved people to earn a stipend continued to be codified in the thirteenth-century *Siete Partidas*, and later in the sixteenth-century *Leyes de Indias*. In the late-medieval period, the *talla* system was developed in Aragon wherein an owner and enslaved person could sign a contract which allowed the enslaved person to make monthly payments over a period of several years in order to purchase their freedom (Phillips 135). The same practice was

¹⁷ Keeping in mind that other attestations not found in Davies suggest some degree of polysemy from the first documentation in the eleventh century.

¹⁸ Of course, there were other ways of obtaining one’s freedom: enslaved people and prisoners could escape, their masters or captors could voluntarily let them go, etc.

fairly common in the Americas, albeit with less regulation. In principle, once the agreed-upon amount was paid, the enslaved person obtained their freedom and received a *carta de (a)horro/ahorría* as proof of the transaction (Lucena Salmoral 359).

The fact that enslaved people were able to purchase their own freedom not only reinforced the salience of MONEY, but it also added an extra dimension to the semasiological profile of *ahorrar*: not only could it be used to refer to a transitive action involving two participants (master frees enslaved person), but also to a reflexive action (enslaved person frees themselves). As I will argue further along, this is an important step in the verb's transition toward the meaning AVOID A DIFFICULTY.

A key point to bear in mind, however, is that—in spite of the occasional comments made by historians to the contrary (e.g. Phillips' definition of the *peculium* above)—the money used by enslaved people to buy their freedom was generally not saved up, but rather paid directly once it was given. In fact, there is little evidence that saving money—by enslaved and free people alike—was common at all until much later. Rodríguez points out that, at least in the fourteenth century, “ransoms were costly and beyond the means of most people who needed them” (153). He goes on to compare average ransom prices with average disposable incomes and concludes that

an unskilled laborer would have needed about twenty-five years to ransom a loved one or to pay off the debt of his own ransom [...] a master craftsman had to save from two to five years to reach the necessary amount. A well-paid oarsman had almost no chance to raise the money in his working lifetime [...] A ship's captain, on the other hand, could raise the necessary money in less than a year and a half. Individuals engaged in the least paying professions would have found it next to impossible to acquire the necessary sum for a ransom from their own wages. (157)

In the sixteenth century, “only a minority of Spaniards took part in industry and commerce; most of them lived on and from the land” (Lynch 142). Lynch goes on to give the following description of the situation, which is worth quoting in full:

In a society where standards were set by the landed aristocracy there were few prospects for labourers and artisans. The Spanish working class of the sixteenth century, confronted by a prosperous nobility whose estate was a magnet for manufacturers and merchants, had visible evidence for the view that work was degrading. In the absence of an identifiable middle class, possible entry to which might have acted as a stimulus, the tenant and the craftsman lost confidence in work as a means of progress. They worked because there was no alternative, or because the alternative was hunger. The notion that the typical Castilian was the idle *hidalgo*, too proud to work, is a myth that would hardly need contradicting were it not repeated so often. Except in the extreme north, in Asturias, *hidalgos* formed a minority of the population; the Basques believed they were all nobles, but that did not prevent them cultivating the land and building ships. The further inference—that in Spain only the moriscos worked—is equally false, for there were hundreds of thousands of hard-working peasants and the extensive public and private building that was done in the sixteenth century could only have been performed by an army of artisans. **Indeed for a miserable subsistence, which barely covered vital provisions, they had to work hard indeed. A contemporary report of the tavern-keepers of Barcelona recorded that the workers of the city ate a midday meal consisting of a piece of bread and garlic. If by any chance the worker had a surplus from**

his wages, heavier and heavier taxation took it from him. But usually he had little to start with. (149-150; emphasis mine)

This grim situation was the norm, not only throughout the Spanish empire, but throughout Europe, and not only in the sixteenth century, but throughout the preceding centuries as well (López Alonso). Nevertheless, it was in the sixteenth century, the point at which the first tokens of *ahorrar* with the sense of SAVE MONEY appear in the database, that a true merchant class began to exist. But, almost immediately, trade between the Peninsula and America picked up speed and led to increased prices in Peninsular markets, primarily due to an increase in demand and an expansion of credit (Grice-Hutchinson 124). As Tomás de Mercado put it in his 1569 publication *Tratos y contratos de mercaderes*:

I saw velvets in Granada that were priced at 28 and 29 *reales*. A fool arrived from the steps, and began to treat and bargain so indiscreetly for the lading of a caravel that within a fortnight he had put up prices to 35 and 36. And the velvet-merchants and weavers went on in this way, and afterwards charged the same prices to their fellow-countrymen [...] So, in Seville, is the daily trend of prices, as much in the mercery that comes from Flanders as in the cloths from Segovia and Toledo, and the wine and oil produced in the Axarafe.¹⁹

A perusal of the relevant body of literature shows a clear consensus among scholars that Peninsular, Spanish-speaking society has seen almost constant economic difficulties since the end of the sixteenth century. There is no need to belabor the point here; suffice it to note that the chapter headings of Comín et al. from the sixteenth century to the present reflect the image of general adversity found throughout the literature:²⁰

Las raíces del atraso económico español: Crisis y decadencia (1590-1714)
(The roots of the Spanish economic delay: Crisis and decadence [1590-1714])

Expansión, reformismo y obstáculos al crecimiento (1715-1789)
(Expansion, reform and obstacles to development [1715-1789])

La crisis de Antiguo Régimen y la revolución liberal (1790-1840)
(The crisis of the Old Regime and the liberal revolution [1790-1840])

El difícil arranque de la industrialización (1840-1880)
(The difficult beginnings of industrialization [1840-1880])

Crisis y recuperación económica en la restauración (1882-1913)
(Crisis and economic recovery during the restoration [1882-1913])

¹⁹ Translation from Grice-Hutchinson (124; brackets added to indicate the location of a sentence omitted in the translation). Facsimile available online at bibliotecadigital.jcyl.es/i18n/consulta/registro.cmd?id=13016.

²⁰ For a general overview of the economic situation in the Peninsula from the tenth to the twentieth century, see Comín et al. For a focus on the twelfth to the eighteenth century, see Grice-Hutchinson; for the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, see Marcos Martín; for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Plaza Prieto, Morales Moya, Rueda Hernanz; and for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, see Harrison, *An economic history*, Harrison, *The Spanish economy*, Sánchez-Albornoz, Shubert, Echeverría Zabalza, Germán et al., Sánchez Marroyo, Carreras and Tafunell, and Barciela et al., among many others.

While the majority of these studies adopt a macro-perspective, analyzing the policies of the State and outlining broad trends, there are occasional mentions of the situation of ‘common’ people (who are, in the end, the ones who tend to drive linguistic change). To exemplify: In addition to quoting the passage by Tomás de Mercado reproduced above, Grice-Hutchinson adds that “consumers were unhappy. Their anxiety was voiced by the Cortes on several occasions. Excessive exports were seen as the main cause of the alarming increase in the cost of living” (124). She goes on to say that

by the middle of the [sixteenth] century the Spanish price-level had drawn away from that of the rest of Europe. At about this time, protests began to be made against the import of foreign manufactures, which, attracted by the high level of Spanish prices, were competing successfully with home products. The balance of trade was turning against Castile, and the hard-won American treasure beginning to melt away. People complained that Spain was ‘the Indies of the foreigner’. And it was true enough. The colonies had paid high prices for Spanish goods, and sent large quantities of the precious metals in return for them. Now, in response to the rise in Spanish prices, foreigners were flooding the Spanish market with relatively cheap merchandise, and draining gold and silver from Spain. They were also capturing an increasingly important share of the Indian trade. (125)

Note that the context is the sixteenth century, before the supposed beginning of the economic decline around the year 1590. But even if the economic situation of ‘common’ people was difficult well before that century, the particular problems caused by new trading patterns made possible after 1492 seem to have been especially difficult. In that context, it would not be surprising to find that Spanish speakers were increasingly concerned about saving money (and resources), and that around the time of the initial crisis of the sixteenth century they began to speak about it with greater frequency, and continued to do so throughout the following centuries. Here are some examples from the corpus that reflect these economic concerns:

- (29) [...] que se obligaba a sustentar nuestra casa, y que lo que pudiésemos ganar sería para vestimos y **ahorrar**.

(Segunda parte de la vida de Lazarillo de Tormes, Juan de Luna, 1605)

([...] that [he] was obligated to support our household, and that what we could earn would be for clothing and **saving**.)

- (30) ¿Estoy loco? Si soy pobre **ahorrando** y adquiriendo, ¿cómo seré rico dando? ¿Este dinero no es el sustento de mi mujer y familia? Pues si doy lo que tengo en mi poder, ¿cómo aguardo a sustentarlos con lo que está en el ajeno? ¿Con qué conciencia puedo soltar el dinero para darlo a los extraños y dejar pereciendo a los propios?

(Epístolas y tratados, Juan de Palafox y Mendoza, 1630)

(Am I crazy? If I am poor [in spite of] **saving** and acquiring, how will I be rich giving? Isn't this money what supports my wife and my family? If I give what I have under my control, how can I expect to support them, with what is going on out there? How can I in good conscience let go of my money to give it to strangers and allow my loved ones to perish?)

- (31) [...] el hecho es que muchos pudiendo **ahorrar** no **ahorran** (en todas las clases), que el motivo es la gran dificultad que para economizar encuentran, y debe reconocerse y combatirse

en vez de tratar de resolver el problema como si no existiese. 4. Los que no pueden querer **ahorrar**. Esta clase, suprimida (en los libros), es muy numerosa, y se compone de los que tienen posibilidad económica, pero no psicológica de **ahorrar**. El caso, muy frecuente, se da cuando el pobre necesita una tensión fuerte y constante de su voluntad para resistir, no ya a las tentaciones del vicio, sino a la de algunos goces honestos, que serían razonables si sus recursos no fueran tan exigüos.

(*El pauperismo*, Concepción Arenal, 1856)

([...] the fact is that many who are able to **save** do not **save** (in all social classes), the reason is the great difficulty that they experience with economizing, and it should be recognized and dealt with instead of trying to resolve the problem as if it did not exist. 4. Those who cannot hope to **save**. This class, ignored (in books), is very large in number, and is composed of those who have the economic, but not psychological, possibility to **save**. The situation frequently arises when the poor person needs strong and constant willpower to resist, not the temptations of vice, but rather those of some innocent pleasures, which would be reasonable if their resources were not so meager.)

It is likely that this trend was the impetus for the sudden appearance of tokens in the database referring to contexts involving money (and concurrently to contexts involving avoiding difficulties). This sudden, drastic cultural change would have had lasting effects, such that, regardless of the actual economic situation in subsequent time periods (that is, in spite of the occasional ‘modest recovery’), the discourse remained essentially the same. This is not to imply, of course, that saving money was not a topic of conversation before the sixteenth century, nor that there were not economic difficulties prior to that time.²¹ The point is that the perceived need to save money likely increased in salience as the economic crises unfolded, and that the increased salience correlated with increased frequency, and thus the link between the concepts SAVE and MONEY was entrenched and conventionalized in the semasiological profile of *ahorrar*. It was not until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that a true middle class began to form (Harrison, *An economic history*; Sánchez-Albornoz; Shubert; Tortella; Germán et al.), and we see a concurrent increase in frequency of the use of the verb to mean SAVE MONEY/RESOURCES—most likely because a large number of Spanish speakers had, for the first time, the ability to do so.

I will now turn to the cognitive factors that likely intervened in the semantic transitions outlined above. Here I will focus on two major points of interest. For the first one, I will argue that the underlying semantic domain REMOVE FROM ACTION/SET ASIDE served as a basis for connecting the various prototypical meanings of *ahorrar*. The second, more important, point of interest returns to the theoretical notions of linguistic units, (ontological) salience, entrenchment, and conventionalization.

Figure 1 shows the diachronic relationship between the three prototypical meanings of *ahorrar* and the underlying domain that links them.

²¹ Nor yet that there were not other words being used to refer to the act of saving money and resources. Since the present study is semasiological in nature, the focus here is limited to the use of this particular verb.

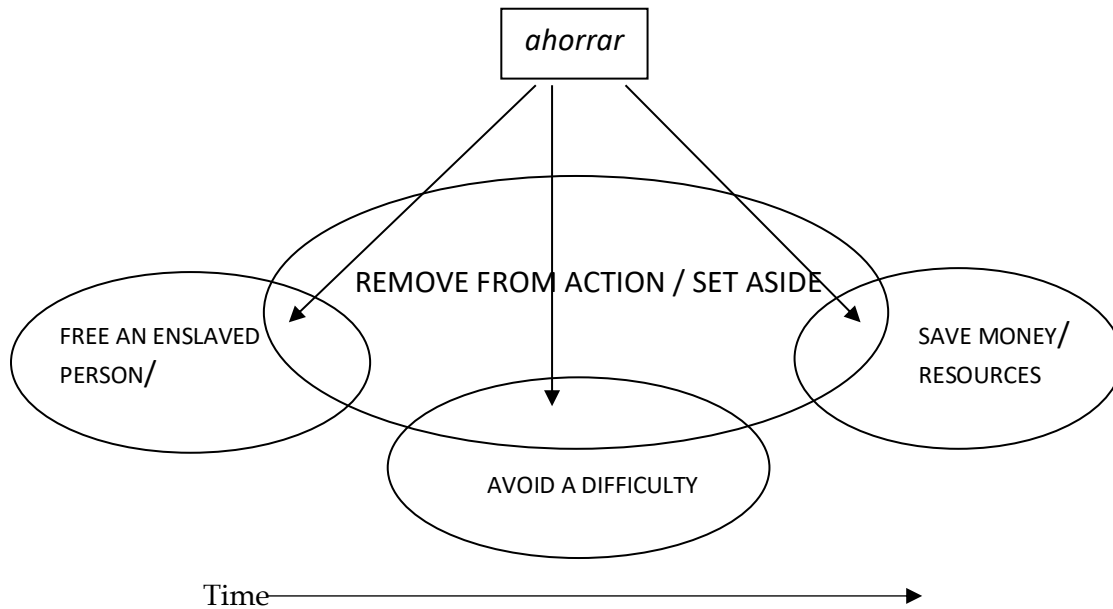


Fig. 1. The diachronic relationship between the prototypical meanings of the lexical item *ahorrar*.

The presence of this underlying domain would explain why examples like (32) are possible, in which there seems to be a blend of two types of patients: resources (*tiempo* and *dinero*) and difficulty (*trabajo*).²²

- (32) [...] las innumerables máquinas, que han inventado, e inventan, con que **ahorran** mucho tiempo, trabajo, y dinero en la ejecución de varias operaciones necesarias [...]
(*Cartas eruditas y curiosas*, Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, 1742)

([...] the innumerable machines that they have invented, and keep inventing, with which they **save** a lot of time, work, and money in the execution of various necessary operations [...])

Obviously, work cannot be saved up in the way that money (or time, if it is interpreted as a resource) can, and time and money are not things one typically wants to avoid (if time can be avoided at all). The only obvious thing that ties them together is the notion of ‘removing from action’ or ‘setting aside’.

The presence of the underlying domain REMOVE FROM ACTION/SET ASIDE would also motivate the appearance of the meaning AVOID A DIFFICULTY in examples like (33) and (34):

- (33) Manumissus. sa. sum. de manumitto. tis. libertado o **ahorrado** dela seruidumbre.
(*Vocabulario eclesiástico*, Rodrigo Fernández de Santaella, 1499)

(Manumitted: freed or **ahorrado** from servitude)

²² Of course, ‘work’ could also, perhaps, be seen as a resource of sorts, in that it is useful for procuring other resources (principally, money).

Entrenchment and conventionalization in “intransitivization” of certain verbs

- (34) Mayormente que antes el cambio se inventó y se ejercita para **ahorrar de peligros**, y es contra su naturaleza correr riesgo el que los da aquí para que se los den en otra parte
(*Summa de tratos y contratos*, Tomás de Mercado, 1545)

(Principally that beforehand the change was invented and is applied in order to **avoid dangers**, and taking risks is against the nature of he who gives them here so that they are given elsewhere)

In example 33, the function of the prepositional phrase is to indicate what the enslaved person or servant was freed from (*seruidumbre*), while in example 34, it indicates what is being avoided. Nonetheless, both the servitude and the dangers are things being ‘set aside’ or taken out of the picture for the enslaved person in example 33 or whomever Tomás de Mercado was referring to in example 34. The same, of course, is true for other examples in which no preposition is present:

- (35) Esta calzada han tenido y tienen hoy en gran veneración los indios de aquella comarca, así porque el mismo Inca trabajó en la obra como por el provecho que sienten de pasar por ella, porque **ahorran mucho camino y trabajo** que antes tenían para descabezar la ciénaga por la una parte o por la otra.
(*Comentarios reales*, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, 1578)

(The Indians of this region have held – and still hold – this road in great veneration, because the same Incas built it and because of the benefit that they gain by using it, because they **avoid a great amount of travelling and work** that they used to deal with in order to clear the swamp.)

In the case of a patron freeing an enslaved person, the enslaved person is ‘removed from action’, or taken from service, or the like. And in examples like (36), anguish is being taken away from the referent of the second-person pronoun:

- (36) Antes que nada, me disculpo por no escribirte inmediatamente, con lo cual te hubiera **ahorrado la angustia** con la que me acabas de hablar hace unas horas
(*El oficio del abuelo*, Erika Mergruen, 1999)

(First of all, I apologize for not immediately writing you, which would have **saved you the anguish** with which you just called me a few hours ago)

The same applies to examples in which the verb means SAVE MONEY/RESOURCES. The money or resource is set aside for later use. This also potentially explains the difference between the presence of money in the contexts of the thirteenth-century examples (i.e. the *preçio* received upon the *aforramiento*) and the later examples (i.e. *dineros* as something being saved).

The presence of the underlying domain REMOVE FROM ACTION/SET ASIDE within the semasiological profile of *ahorrar* allowed the metaphoric extensions necessary for the changes to take place. A series of mental associations would have allowed speakers to use the same word for various purposes:

FREEING AN ENSLAVED PERSON/PRISONER IS REMOVING THE ENSLAVED PERSON/PRISONER FROM ACTION (SETTING IT ASIDE)

AVOIDING A DIFFICULTY IS REMOVING THE DIFFICULTY FROM ACTION (SETTING IT ASIDE)

SAVING MONEY/RESOURCES IS REMOVING THE MONEY/RESOURCES FROM ACTION (SETTING IT ASIDE)

Of course, this list is highly simplified, and does not capture the entire picture. A large number of additional domains are intertwined with the elements of these metaphors (LEGAL TRANSACTION, ECONOMICS, FREEDOM, CONVENIENCE, PRIVATE SPHERE, PUBLIC SPHERE, etc.), and the associations were not necessarily made in a linear fashion. Rather, the domains interacted with each other in a dynamic, encyclopedic fashion (Korfhagen, *Social and cognitive factors* 8-45). The interactions were not arbitrary, but they were guided by social factors. Ultimately, the verb became a viable choice for reference to the actions of saving money and resources, in a social context which increased the salience of a perceived need to perform those actions.

We will now turn toward the current situation and the outlook for the future of *ahorrar*'s semasiological profile. The most striking examples from the last few centuries involve the meaning SAVE MONEY, but without an explicit direct object:²³

- (37) [...] dio comienzo a la consulta. Al terminarla (¡cuatro duros encima de la mesa!) persistía la pena de que la oferta no se le hubiese hecho cinco o seis años después, cuando ya él hubiera **ahorrado** lo bastante.

(*El médico rural*, Felipe Trigo, 1890)

([...] he began the consultation. When it was over (four *duros* [coins worth 5 pesetas each] on the table!), the regret persisted in his mind that the offer had not been given to him five or six years later, by which time he would have **saved** enough.)

- (38) Enderezó el cuerpo y alzó la cabeza: - Lo gasté todo; tendré que **ahorrar** de nuevo, se dijo, el rostro ahora tranquilo [...]

(*Memoria sin tiempo*, Maybell Lebron, 1992)

(She straightened her body and lifted her head: I spent everything; I'll have to **save** again, she told herself, her face now relaxed [...])

It is, of course, not particularly difficult to interpret the meaning of the verb in these examples, given their close collocation with other words that invoke the domain MONEY (*cuatro duros* 'four coins' in example 37, and *gasté* 'I spent' in 38). But examples 39-41 require a bit more encyclopedic knowledge:

- (39) Y yo me voy contigo - dijo Silda su andar lento y oscilante, parecía un oso polar, suponiendo que en el Polo hubiera osos verdes de medio arriba, y pardos de medio abajo. No había cosa más decente a que compararle. Sotileza le había predicado mucho que **ahorrara** para echarse un vestido bueno de día de fiesta [...]

(*Sotileza*, José María de Pereda, 1870)

(I'm going with you, said Silda, her gait slow and wavering, she looked like a polar bear, supposing that in the Arctic there were bears that were green from the waist up, and

²³ Example 37 is the earliest case I found in the corpus without an explicit direct object.

brown from the waist down. There was nothing more decent to compare her to. Sotileza advised her to save in order to get herself a good party dress [...])

- (40) Hacía cinco o seis años que habían suprimido el chófer, para ahorrar un poco y para adaptarse a los tiempos modernos, que en el momento de tomar esa decisión, en la mitad del período de Salvador Allende, se anunciaban tormentosos, difíciles.

(*La mujer imaginaria*, Jorge Edwards, 1985)

(It had been five or six years since they had gotten rid of the chauffeur, in order to save a little and to adapt to modern times, which looked especially difficult at the time that they made the decision, halfway through the Salvador Allende period.)

- (41) Tampoco yo era un potentado, pero prefería ahorrar todo un mes para ir a una discoteca de moda como el “Pachá” y reventar hasta el amanecer, antes que salir todos los fines de semana a cualquier antro.

(*¿Mientes?*, Ivan Thays, 1997)

(I was hardly a tycoon, but I preferred to save for a whole month to go to a fashionable discotheque like the “Pachá” and stay out all night, rather than going out every weekend to any regular club.)

In example 39, the reader must interpret the highly polysemous verb *echarse* as ‘purchase’, along with the fact that ‘decency’ and ‘good party dresses’ are associated with having a certain amount of money, (40) requires an understanding of the economic difficulties associated with ‘modern times’ during the presidency of Salvador Allende, as well as the fact that money had to be spent to pay a chauffeur, and (41) requires knowledge of the fact that ‘tycoons’ are rich and that admission to fashionable discotheques requires a lot of money. Example 42 is even more obscure; one must know that saving money is sometimes associated with negative connotations: a person who focuses on saving (i.e. not spending) can be considered boring or isolated (hence, given to anger when confronted with new experiences).

- (42) La gente en seguida arremete contra los niños, aunque muchas veces el enojo de los hombres proviene de su natural irritable y suspicaz y no de las travesuras de aquéllos. Ahí estaba Paco, el herrero. Él les comprendía porque tenía salud y buen estómago, y si el Peón no hacía lo mismo era por sus ácidos y por su rostro y su hígado retorcidos. Y su mismo padre, el quesero, porque el afán ávido de ahorrar le impedía ver las cosas en el aspecto optimista y risueño que generalmente ofrecen.

(*El camino*, Miguel Delibes, 1950)

(People immediately go after the children, although men’s anger often comes from their irritable and suspicious nature and not from the children’s mischief. So it was with Paco, the blacksmith. He understood them because he had good health and a good stomach, and if Peón didn’t do the same it was because of his ulcers and his warped face and liver. And his own father, the cheesemaker, because his avid desire to save kept him from seeing things in the positive and cheerful light that they normally offer.)

Examples like (37-42) reflect the beginnings of the final step in the process of intransitivization. As Figure 2 and Table 2 show, in the data for the twentieth century, 61% of the

tokens (154/253) involve the domain SAVE MONEY. This is a notable increase in frequency from the previous several centuries: the sixteenth shows 25/150 tokens involving money (17%); the seventeenth shows 39/189 (21%); the eighteenth shows 29/134 (22%); and the nineteenth shows 102/315 (32%).²⁴ Moreover, explicit mention of the direct object/patient (some form of money) has decreased in frequency (dropping from a peak of 52% [15/29] in the eighteenth century to 34% [52/154] by the twentieth).

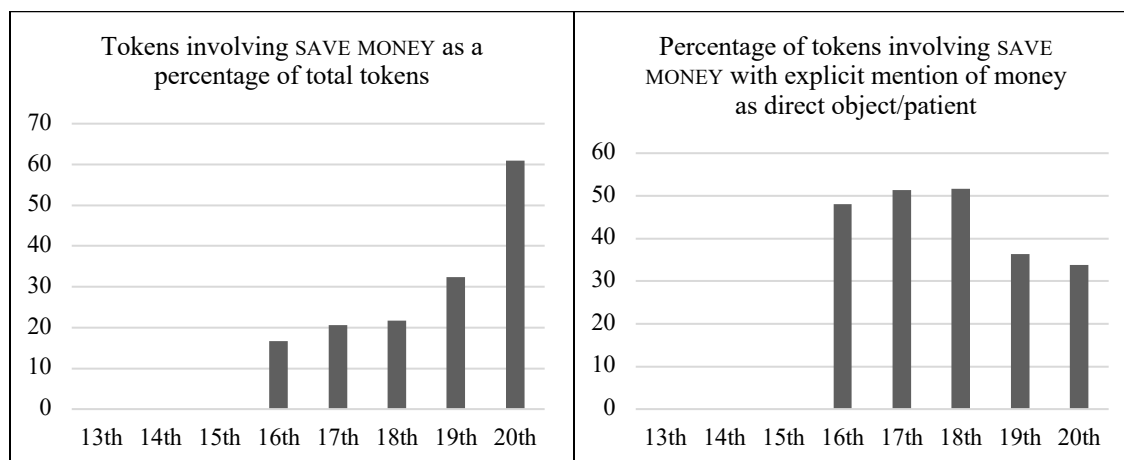


Fig. 2. Percentages of tokens of *ahorrar* involving the domain SAVE MONEY and of tokens with an explicit mention of money as the direct object/patient.

| | 13th | 14th | 15th | 16th | 17th | 18th | 19th | 20th |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Tokens involving SAVE MONEY | 0 | 0 | 0 | 25 | 39 | 29 | 102 | 154 |
| Tokens involving explicit mention of money (as direct object/patient) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 20 | 15 | 37 | 52 |
| Total number of tokens | 144 | 6 | 15 | 150 | 189 | 134 | 315 | 253 |

Table 2. Numerical summary of Fig. 2.

These data suggest that, in this case, entrenchment (and, ultimately, conventionalization) involves the incorporation of a specific type of direct object/patient (money) into the semasiological profile of the transitive verb *ahorrar*, resulting in a higher frequency of intransitive uses (in the sense that the direct object/patient is not mentioned explicitly). That is, the collocational relationship between the two domains SAVE and MONEY seems to have become increasingly ontologically salient (through the development of a middle class, the possibility of saving money became more commonplace, and the need to do so became more salient as

²⁴ If we include the generalized notion of resources (e.g. time, water, air, gasoline, energy, etc.), the percentages jump to 76% (193/253 tokens) in the twentieth century, 38% (57/150) in the sixteenth century; 37% (69/189) in the seventeenth; 34% (45/134) in the eighteenth; and 40% (125/315) in the nineteenth.

economic crises unfolded), and its corresponding linguistic unit (the lexical item *ahorrar*) seems to be in the process of conventionalizing as a (partially) intransitive verb—partially in that the process only applies to the particular context of talking about money. To put it another way, consider Schmid’s statement that “[...] although the size of linguistic units can vary from single morphemes to quite elaborate syntactic constructions, it is the hallmark of fully entrenched units that they are conceived of as single *gestalts*” (121). In the case of intransitive *ahorrar*, the components of the *gestalt* would be the ‘transitive action’ of SAVE and the direct object/patient MONEY which, together, comprise a single domain within the verb’s semasiological profile.²⁵

As Fig. 2 also shows, the process of full intransitivization is far from complete. The data from the twentieth century show that money was still explicitly mentioned 34% of the time as a direct object/patient in the context of saving money (and other miscellaneous resources were also present in their respective context). Not to mention the 57 tokens referring to avoiding difficulties (23% of the total tokens for the twentieth century), and the 3 ‘other’ tokens, as seen earlier in Table 1. The point, nonetheless, is that the trend favors the possibility that the verb could eventually end up being fully intransitive (i.e. with the idea of MONEY fully integrated into the semantic profile of the verb, such that mentioning it would always seem redundant). Even if this does not become the case, the influence of the conventionalization process as discussed above does seem clear, not only in the innovatory use of the verb sometime around the sixteenth century, but also in its development in the subsequent centuries, as the perceived need to save money (and other resources) became increasingly salient within the speech community.

Similar processes may have occurred with many intransitive verbs (at least ones that were once transitive, or still are and can be used intransitively). In the case of *afeitar*, it is often unnecessary to indicate what is the thing being shaven (*la barba, la cara*, etc.), although this was not always the case (Korfhagen, “Social factors in semantic change”). It could be a matter of the increased salience of male agents/patients/beneficiaries in the context of shaving. Something similar could apply to verbs like *conducir* (or *manejar*), in which the thing being driven usually does not need to be mentioned. It could even apply to certain nouns whose increased salience within specific contexts correlates with decreased need for adjectival modification (e.g. *Te mando un correo [electrónico]*). All three of these examples appear to have undergone semasiological shifts due to changes in society (as do most, if not all, of the verbs mentioned by Armstrong).

Conclusions

The principal task of this study was to examine the semasiological restructuring of *ahorrar* in terms of social and cognitive factors, such that intransitive uses of this otherwise transitive verb have become increasingly viable and frequent. Analysis of the data from Davies revealed two major shifts in the verb’s prototypical meaning: from FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON/PRISONER to

²⁵ This is essentially the same point as the one made by Armstrong—albeit from a different theoretical perspective—with respect to similar verbs (*leer* ‘read’, *comer* ‘eat’, *tomar* ‘drink’, *beber* ‘drink’, etc.). In the absence of contextual factors that would elicit atypical readings, “there is a general prototypicality constraint on the interpretation of unspecified objects” (172). It seems that *ahorrar* would represent a special case, where MONEY has reached a level of prototypicality such that it is generally the only interpretation in utterances like *tengo que ahorrar* ‘I have to save [money]’, akin to cases like *Juan tomó/bebió toda la noche* ‘Juan drank [alcohol] all night’, where ALCOHOL is (almost) always the implied object (ibid.). This point is further bolstered by the Real Academia Española’s entry for *ahorrar* in the *Diccionario de la lengua Española*, wherein the only senses marked as potentially intransitive are the two that refer to money: “1. tr. Reservar una parte de los ingresos ordinarios. U. t. c. intr. [...] 2. tr. Guardar dinero como previsión para necesidades futuras. U. t. c. intr.” (1. tr[ansitive]. Set aside a part of one’s normal income. [Also used as intransitive]. [...] 2. tr[ansitive]. Save money in anticipation of future necessities. [Also used as intransitive].).

AVOID A DIFFICULTY during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and from AVOID A DIFFICULTY to SAVE MONEY/RESOURCES during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

With regard to social factors, I have suggested that a particular series of economic crises, originating in the sixteenth century, influenced the cognitive experience of individuals by increasing the ontological salience of a perceived need to save money and resources. This increased salience contributed to increased frequency of discussion of the topic during social interaction. The underlying conceptualization of REMOVE FROM ACTION/SET ASIDE made the lexical item *ahorrar* a good candidate for reference to the actions of saving money and other resources, and consequently the use of the lexical item increased in frequency. The increased frequency resulted in entrenchment of the gestalt whose component parts were the ‘transitive action’ of SAVE and the direct object/patient MONEY, at which point the ‘intransitive’ use of the verb gained unit status in the minds of individual speakers. With the passing of time and continued economic problems, the unit has become increasingly conventionalized, such that when speakers use the verb without mentioning an object/patient, the default assumption is most likely that the thing being saved is money.

In terms of ontological salience, the practice of freeing enslaved people gradually decreased over time, while the perceived need to save money and resources increased. This correlated with a decrease in cognitive salience of the domain FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON/PRISONER, and an increase in the cognitive salience of the domains AVOID A DIFFICULTY and SAVE MONEY/RESOURCES within the semasiological profile of *ahorrar*. The underlying domain SET ASIDE/REMOVE FROM ACTION aided in the metaphorical transition from the first domain to the third as semasiological prototypes of the verb. We have seen a progression from SETTING ASIDE /REMOVING AN ENSLAVED PERSON FROM THE ACTION/STATE OF BEING ENSLAVED, to SETTING ASIDE/REMOVING A DIFFICULTY/INCONVENIENCE/DANGER FROM ONE’S PATH (i.e. AVOIDING IT), to SETTING ASIDE/REMOVING MONEY/RESOURCES FROM ONE’S BUDGET (i.e. FREEING ONESELF FROM DEBT/CUTTING DOWN ON EXPENSES). Each innovative step along the way involved entrenchment of the salient domains in the minds of individual speakers – that is, in the semasiological profile that each speaker mentally constructed with regard to the verb *ahorrar* – and, through interaction between speakers, the newly-configured profiles were conventionalized over time.

The peripheralization of FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON/PRISONER within the semasiological profile of *ahorrar* was likely due to a combination of factors. The decline and abolition of slavery did remove the verb’s referent from the daily-life experience of most Spanish speakers and relegated it – for the most part – to discussion of the past.²⁶ But FREE AN ENSLAVED PERSON was already a peripheral domain well before the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century, and there is no obvious reason why FREE A PRISONER would peripheralize along with it. The notion that an enslaved person could purchase their own freedom, provided by the legal tradition established in the Roman *Corpus Juris Civilis* and maintained in the *Siete Partidas* and the *Leyes de Indias*, certainly helped give rise to the reflexive form *ahorrarse*. Once the domain FREE ONESELF became sufficiently salient, the action of doing so could be more readily interpreted as AVOID A DIFFICULTY, since the erstwhile patient (i.e. the enslaved person or prisoner) was now conceptualized as an agent.

Whether or not the process of intransitivization will eventually become complete depends, obviously, on whether or not speakers continue to use the lexical item to refer to direct object/patients other than money (i.e. resources, etc.). Nevertheless, it seems safe to say that the

²⁶ Of course, the legal abolition of slavery did not end the practice of enslaving people altogether (on the contrary, by some estimates there are more enslaved people now than there ever were). It did, however, severely reduce the average person’s exposure to the practice.

changes in the verb's semasiological profile to date can be better understood through analysis of the intervening social and cognitive factors outlined above.

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