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Citation for published version (APA):

DOI:
10.1103/PhysRevLett.104.185002

Document status and date:
Published: 01/01/2010

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of Record (includes final page, issue and volume numbers)

Please check the document version of this publication:

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Download date: 25. Nov. 2019
Convective and Diffusive Energetic Particle Losses Induced by Shear Alfvén Waves in the ASDEX Upgrade Tokamak

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(Received 28 December 2009; published 6 May 2010)

We present here the first phase-space characterization of convective and diffusive energetic particle losses induced by shear Alfvén waves in a magnetically confined fusion plasma. While single toroidal Alfvén eigenmodes (TAE) and Alfvén cascades (AC) eject resonant fast ions in a convective process, an overlapping of AC and TAE spatial structures leads to a large fast-ion diffusion and loss. Diffusive fast-ion losses have been observed with a single TAE above a certain threshold in the fluctuation amplitude.

DOI: 10.1103/PhysRevLett.104.185002 PACS numbers: 52.55.Pi, 52.35.Bj

Alfvén waves are ubiquitous in astrophysical as well as in laboratory plasmas [1]. Their interplay with energetic ions is of crucial importance to understanding the energy and particle exchange in astrophysical plasmas [2] as well as to obtaining a viable energy source in magnetically confined fusion devices such as ITER [3]. In astrophysics, Alfvénic instabilities are thought to be responsible for the anomalous transport of particles and energy in regimes such as the heating of the solar corona or the generation of the solar wind [4–7]. In magnetically confined fusion plasmas, the excitation of shear Alfvén waves such as reverse shear Alfvén eigenmodes (RSAEs) [8,9], so-called Alfvén cascades (ACs), and toroidal Alfvén eigenmodes (TAEs) [10,11] is of special importance for addressing the fast-ion transport across the magnetic field lines because of their potential to eject fast ions before their thermalization [12,13].

The nonlinear evolution of Alfvénic instabilities driven by energetic particles and the subsequent redistribution of those particles has been the focus of exhaustive theoretical studies [14–19]. A wave-particle exchange of momentum and energy takes place in tokamaks if the resonant condition $\Omega_{n,p} = n \omega_\phi - p \omega_\theta - \omega = 0$ is fulfilled [20]. Here, $n$ is the toroidal mode number, $p$ is the poloidal harmonic, $\omega_\phi$ the fast-ion precession frequency, $\omega_\theta$ the fast-ion poloidal frequency, $\omega$ the mode frequency and $\Omega_{n,p}$ the resonance width [21,22]. At each resonance, the wave-particle momentum exchange, proportional to the fluctuation amplitude $\delta B$, corresponds to a radial drift of the fast ions. This linear momentum exchange may cause convective losses of fast ions if the right wave-particle relative phase is given. However, depending on whether modes spatial structures and phase-space resonances overlap local or global redistribution of fast ions may occur [23]. If most of the relevant phase space is covered by overlapping resonances particles can be lost via stochastic diffusion [24]. For single modes, stochastic losses caused by the overlapping of sideband resonances are proportional to $(\delta B)^2$ [15]. Experimentally, a detailed knowledge of the wave-particle interaction can be gained from direct measurements of MHD induced fast-ion losses in fusion plasmas [25,26]. Fast-ion loss detectors (FILD) in fusion devices obtain typically a crucial information on the phase space of the lost ions [27–31].

In this Letter, we present the phase-space characterization of convective and diffusive fast-ion losses induced by shear Alfvén waves in a magnetically confined fusion plasma. The experiments discussed here have been performed in plasmas with toroidal plasma current $I_p = 0.8$ MA, toroidal field $B_t = 2.0$ T, safety factor at the edge $q_{95} = 4.0$, and ion cyclotron resonance heating (ICRH) as the main heating and fast particle source. 4.5 MW of on axis ICRH hydrogen minority heating was applied to a deuterium plasma ($n_H/n_D = 5\%$). Figure 1(a) shows the core line integrated electron density, $n_e$, and neutron rate for the discharge presented here, #23824. Figures 1(b) and 1(c) show, respectively, the Fourier spectrogram for a magnetic fluctuation signal and for a soft x-ray (SXR) signal, corresponding to a line of sight passing through the plasma core. Several coherent MHD fluctuations are visible around 110 kHz up to 170 kHz. They correspond to TAEs with different toroidal mode numbers [32] $n$’s ($n = 3, 4, 5$), as obtained from Mirnov coils [33], whose identification is confirmed also by comparison with ideal MHD calculations carried out with the CASTOR code [34]. Magnetic fluctuations chirping up in frequency from $\approx 50$ kHz up to the TAE frequencies, $f_{\text{TAE}} = V_A/4 \pi q R_0$, are barely visible in the magnetics spectrogram. Here, $V_A$ is the Alfvén speed and $R_0$ is the major radius. These frequency chirping fluctuations have been identified as ACs by means of the SXR emission from the plasma core as Fig. 1(c) shows. The lowest AC frequency, $f_{\text{AC}}^\text{min}$, in Fig. 1 is mainly given by the geodesic compressibility and the toroidal coupling to the acoustic waves, as expected by the theory [35]. Pressure effects modify the local dispersion relation for shear Alfvén waves in low-$\beta$ plas-
The selected AC and TAE frequency bands are given in Fig. 2. Figure 2(a) shows global TAEs extended from $\rho_{\text{pol}} = 0.23$ up to the edge with broad ACs localized at $\rho_{\text{pol}} = 0.4$. A complete overlapping of AC-TAE radial structures is clearly visible. Figure 2(b) shows the AC-TAE radial structures for a later time interval. TAEs shift outwards becoming more localized while ACs shift inwards becoming also more localized at $\rho_{\text{pol}} = 0.3$. The overlapping region (highlighted in yellow) becomes smaller. Finally, Fig. 2(c) shows a neglectable AC-TAE spatial overlapping with ACs and TAEs well localized at $\rho_{\text{pol}} = 0.3$ and $\rho_{\text{pol}} = 0.6$, respectively. The largest ACs and TAEs presented here caused a normalized $T_e$ perturbation of $\delta T_e/T_e = 0.009$.

In order to fully characterize the orbits of the lost ions and identify the wave-particle resonances responsible for the losses, the phase-space (energy and pitch angle) of the fast-ion losses is shown in Fig. 3. In the presence of multiple AEs, e.g., $t = 1.36$, fast ions are ejected within a broad energy range with a gyroradius from $\approx 35$ mm up to $\approx 105$ mm, see Fig. 3(a). For the magnetic field at the probe, $B = 1.6$ T, this gyroradius range corresponds to hydrogen ions with energies between $\approx 0.2$ and $\approx 1.4$ MeV. As expected from ICRH heated plasmas the fast-ion losses appear at high pitch angles between $67^{\circ}$ and $80^{\circ}$. The phase space of lost fast ions changes strongly during the evolution of the AE activity, showing a completely different pattern within the next 200 ms. Figure 3(b) presents fast-ion losses well localized at high pitch angles ($\approx 71^{\circ}$) and energies (gyroradius $\approx 60$ mm).

A Fourier analysis of the fast-ion loss signal allows us to identify the MHD fluctuations responsible for these losses.
interact with the Alf"{v}en-acoustic branch near the geodesic frequency. Ion losses chirping in frequency from approximately the TAE frequency are not as strong as those responsible for the onset of the incoherent losses. During the time window \( t = 1.52 \text{s} \), when the local maximum radial displacement of the magnetic field lines is larger than \( 2 \text{ mm} \) as measured by its fluctuation induced on the SXR emission. This threshold in the fluctuation amplitude is depicted in Fig. 4(b) with a vertical dashed line. The basic properties of the coherent and incoherent losses are investigated through their dependence on the magnetic fluctuation amplitude. Tracking the frequencies of the individual fluctuations in both magnetics and FILD spectograms, we get the relationship between the coherent fast-ion losses and the corresponding magnetic fluctuation amplitude. Figure 5(a) shows this exercise for the TAE \( n = 3 \) between \( t = 1.24 \text{s} \) and \( t = 1.32 \text{s} \). A clear linear dependence is visible during the whole time window, showing the convective character of the underlying loss mechanism. A similar analysis has been done for the incoherent losses shown in Fig. 4(b). The envelope of the incoherent losses, black curve in Fig. 4(b), is plotted in Fig. 5(b) as a function of the amplitude of the TAE \( n = 5 \) for a time interval close to the onset of the incoherent losses, inset in Fig. 5(b).
ent phase velocities, a simple explanation in terms of stochasticization in real space cannot be given. It remains a subject of further studies to explain how incoherent losses can occur under these conditions. For single TAEs, diffusive losses of fast ions, scaling as \((\delta B)^2\), are observed for local radial displacements of the magnetic field lines larger than \(\approx 2\) mm. The results presented here may be of general interest for better understanding the wave-particle interactions and subsequent energy and particle transport in fusion devices as well as in astrophysical plasmas.

The authors wish to thank H. L. Berk, F. Ryter, and H. Zohm for very fruitful discussions.

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