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OF RF CURRENT DRIVE

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ABSTRACT

The theory of rf-driven plasma currents is applied to the lower-hybrid experiments on the PLT tokamak. Particular emphasis is placed on those experiments in which the plasma current was varying. The comparison between theory and experiment is made with respect to the efficiency with which rf energy was converted to poloidal magnetic field energy. Good agreement is found irrespective of whether the current was increasing, constant, or decreasing.

Lower-hybrid waves have been used to increase the toroidal current in tokamaks.¹⁻⁷ The efficiency of this process is expressed as the ratio of the rate of change of the poloidal field energy \dot{W} [$W = (1/2)LI^2$] to the rf power injected P_{rf} . In the PLT experiment an efficiency of about 25% has been reported.^{6,7}

Recently, a theory of this process (rf-current ramp-up) has been proposed.⁸ This theory generalizes the more restricted theory of steady-state^{9,10} and nearly steady-state¹¹ current drive and, in this letter, we analyze the data from PLT in light of this generalization. Details of the experiment appear elsewhere.^{6,7,10}

The theory identifies two dimensionless parameters and derives a relationship between them. One parameter is the ratio P_{el}/P_{in} , where P_{in} is the rf power absorbed by the hot current-carrying electrons (presumably some fraction η of P_{rf}), and P_{el} is the power flowing from these electrons into the poloidal field. The second parameter is $u = v_{ph}/v_R$, where v_{ph} is the parallel phase velocity of the lower-hybrid waves in the plasma and v_R is the runaway velocity defined by $v_R^2 = |nq^3 \log\Lambda/4\pi\epsilon_0^2 Em|$. We adopt the sign convention that $v_R > 0$ in the "normal" ramp-up cases, i.e., when there is an electric field opposing the rf current, and $v_R < 0$ when the electric field is in the same direction as the rf current. This parameter reflects the relative importance of the electric field and collisions in slowing down the hot electrons. When collisions dominate the slowing down ($u \ll 1$), we expect poor ramp-up efficiency, whereas when the electric field dominates ($u \gg 1$), we expect an efficiency close to unity.

The experimental data, on the other hand, are often plotted as efficiency vs P_{rf} . In order to compare theory with experiment, we must relate the experimental observables to the theoretical parameters. Assuming that $P_{in} =$

ηP_{rf} , we may write

$$\eta \frac{P_{el}}{P_{in}} = \frac{P_{el}}{P_{rf}} = \frac{\dot{W} - P_{ext} + V^2/R}{P_{rf}} \quad (1)$$

The expression for P_{el} is derived by balancing contributions to \dot{W} . These are P_{el} , P_{ext} (the power coupled from the vertical and ohmic coils), and V^2/R (the ohmic dissipation). The second theoretical parameter, u , may be determined using $v_{ph} = c/n_{\parallel}\beta$, where n_{\parallel} is the parallel index of refraction determined from a Fourier analysis of the launched waves and β is the factor by which n_{\parallel} is upshifted when the wave propagates into the plasma. The runaway velocity v_R is given directly in terms of experimental observables.

Figure 1 shows the experimental data from PLT plotted in terms of P_{el}/P_{rf} and u . This includes the results of over 250 shots with various values of density, waveguide phasing, and rf power. These shots constitute all the ramp-up experiments on PLT during the period September - October 1983, including those cases where the current was steady or decaying, so long as the duration of the rf exceeded 200 ms. In view of the wide parameter space covered by these shots, the data show remarkably little scatter, which provides strong evidence that the crucial dimensionless parameters have been identified.

In Ref. 8, a function $G = G(u, Z)$ is defined, where Z is the effective ion charge state, and the relation

$$P_{el}/P_{in} = (\partial G/\partial u)/u \quad (2)$$

is derived by ignoring rf-generated runaways, which are not expected to be confined long in the PLT experiment. Experimental estimates, based on the

total level of hard X-ray emissions, suggest $Z \approx 5$. Hence, we take $G = G(u, 5)$ in comparing theory with experiment in Fig. 1. Note, however, that G is not very sensitive to its Z dependence.

Two adjustable parameters must be chosen in order to compare theory and experiment. They are the absorption factor η and the n_{\parallel} upshift factor β . These parameters act as scale factors on the two axes. The best fit, displayed in Fig. 1, is given when $\beta = 1.4$ and $\eta = 0.75$. Therefore in the best case, corresponding to $P_{el}/P_{rf} = 43\%$, the theoretical conversion efficiency P_{el}/P_{in} approaches 60%. Of course, it is possible to define more general functions η and β , introducing dependencies on waveguide phasing, power, etc., which obviously would allow us to fit the data better. We choose not to do so because there is no very compelling theoretical reason to choose anything more complicated than a constant. The assumption here is that the data are less sensitive to the theories of absorption and upshift than to the theory of efficiency, and choosing the simplest functions provides the severest test for the efficiency theory. So, considering that there are only two adjustable parameters, there is startling agreement over the full range of the curve. In particular, the experimental data faithfully reproduce the "diode" characteristics of the theoretical formula.

The data in Fig. 1 illustrate three rf current-drive regimes. For $u > 0$, the rf causes the current to increase, and P_{el}/P_{rf} monotonically increases because the electric field plays an increasingly dominant role in slowing down the hot electrons. However for large u , the ohmic losses become large. This means that although P_{el}/P_{rf} increases, \dot{W}/P_{rf} may decrease. For $u = 0$, a steady-state current is achieved and the ramp-up efficiency is, of course, zero, since the hot electrons slow down only due to collisions. For $u < 0$, the rf power is insufficient to prevent the current from decaying, and,

interestingly, power flows from the poloidal field into the hot electrons ($P_{e1} < 0$). Nevertheless, W does not decay as rapidly as with no rf, since the v^2/R losses are reduced. Note that, near $u = 0$, only a small electric field is present, and the theory of the steady-state ($u = 0$) rf-generated current^{9,10} and the theory of rf-enhanced ($u \approx 0$) conductivity¹¹ may be tested. Clearly, the experimental data here offer solid confirmation of these theories, including the scaling of the steady-state efficiency with density and phase velocity. Note that in making the comparison to the steady-state theory, we may use the second derivative of the theoretical curve in Fig. 1, which is just the so-defined steady-state efficiency, I_{rf}/P_{in} (as opposed to the ramp-up efficiency used here).

Apart from the conclusions drawn from the very small scatter in the data, what does this apparently remarkable agreement between theory and experiment tell us? While the lack of scatter indicates the identification of the relevant dimensionless parameters, the fit to the data can be used as corroboration for the theoretical relationship between these parameters. Alternatively, the theory can be assumed to be correct and the exercise of fitting the data can be used to provide rough estimates for η and β , two quantities which are difficult to measure experimentally. In making the best fit, note that η and β are not independent; e.g, if $\beta = 1$, then $\eta = 0.5$ provides the best fit, although not as good for the pair of values used in the figure. Observe that the best estimates for η and β turn out to be consistent with the expectation that large absorption requires a moderate $n_{||}$ upshift.^{13,14} The consistency of experiment and theory gives us confidence in extrapolating these results to larger machines.

There are some subtleties in the calculation of the experimental data points which we wish to elucidate. The most important quantity which must be

carefully measured is $\dot{W} - P_{\text{ext}}$. This is determined as a function of time by using the experimentally observed plasmas current, an estimate of the total inductance and the currents in the external coils. The inductance includes the calculated external inductance (given by the position of the plasma) and an internal inductance, which is approximately deduced from the vertical field. Generally $\dot{W} - P_{\text{ext}}$ is not exactly constant over the rf pulse and an average quantity is employed in Eq. (1). The question is how to perform this averaging.

Traces of $\dot{W} - P_{\text{ext}}$ for two shots are shown in Fig. 2, with Fig. 2a representing the more typical situation. In both cases there is a transient portion before $\dot{W} - P_{\text{ext}}$ settles down to a nearly steady value about 100 ms after the beginning of the rf pulse. Two methods of averaging $\dot{W} - P_{\text{ext}}$ suggest themselves: either averaging over the whole rf pulse or averaging over all but the first 100 ms where $\dot{W} - P_{\text{ext}}$ is more nearly constant. The two methods give $P_{\text{el}}/P_{\text{rf}} = 32\%$ and 21% for the shot shown in Fig. 2a, and 16% and 36% for that in Fig. 2b. When the data for all the shots are compared, the first method (which is used in Fig. 1) gives much less scatter. The scatter in data when the second method is used arises primarily from the shots represented by Fig. 2b, which lie considerably above the other points. The reason for this may lie in the ability of the plasma to transfer energy between energetic particles and the field energy. During the initial part of the rf pulse in Fig. 2b, the current is still decaying and there is a forward electric field. It is possible that a large population of runaways may be generated in these circumstances, and they will absorb energy from the poloidal field. However, this energy flows back into the poloidal field when \dot{i} changes sign and the runaways slow down giving an apparently high efficiency.

By averaging over the whole rf pulse, we can ignore the temporary storage of energy in the runaway component that may occur in Fig. 2b. Similarly, the initially high value of $\dot{W} - P_{\text{ext}}$ seen in Fig. 2a may be due to the presence of forward runaways when the rf is first turned on. Strictly speaking we would wish to eliminate this additional source of energy when making the comparison to the theory. However, there appears to be no convenient and consistent way of doing so while still avoiding the potential problem with pulses like Fig. 2b. If this is the explanation for the peak in Fig. 2a, some of the experimental values for $P_{\text{el}}/P_{\text{rf}}$ in Fig. 1 may be overestimated.

The voltage V , which is needed in the calculation of v_R and of the ohmic loss V^2/R , is computed as $(P_{\text{ext}} - \dot{W})/I$. The calculation of R is difficult. One method is to calculate the ratio of voltage to current before the rf is turned on. This method was rejected since the initial ohmic plasma may have a significant non-Maxwellian component which lowers R . However, the non-Maxwellian or "slide-away" electrons will slow down by collisions during the rf pulse and not then dominate the conductivity. Instead R is calculated using the Spitzer-Harm conductivity with the temperature estimated using a crude energy balance and neo-Alcator scaling. The temperature so obtained approximately conforms to the meager Thomson scattering data. Typically V^2/R is a small term (about 10%) in the calculation of P_{el} and so, fortunately our results are insensitive to errors in this crude calculation of R .

We have shown in this letter that the theory given in Ref. 8 explains the ramp-up efficiencies in PLT. The agreement is over a wide range of plasma parameters, encompassing shots in which the current is increasing, steady, and decaying. Confidence in our understanding of these experiments now allows the contemplation of larger machines utilizing the favorable rf-ramp-up regime attained in PLT.

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FIGURE CAPTIONS

FIG. 1. P_{el}/P_{rf} vs u for 250 PLT shots. The rf power P_{rf} varied from 0 to 300 kW, the density n from 1.5×10^{12} to $6.0 \times 10^{12} \text{cm}^{-3}$, the plasma current I from 150 to 400 kA. Three waveguide phasings were used 60° (*), 90° (+), and 135° (#).

FIG. 2. Traces of $\dot{W} - P_{ext}$ vs t for two representative ramp-up shots. In (a), $P_{rf} = 160$ kW and $\dot{I} > 0$ as soon as the rf is turned on. In (b), $P_{rf} = 96$ kW and there is a delay in \dot{I} changing sign.

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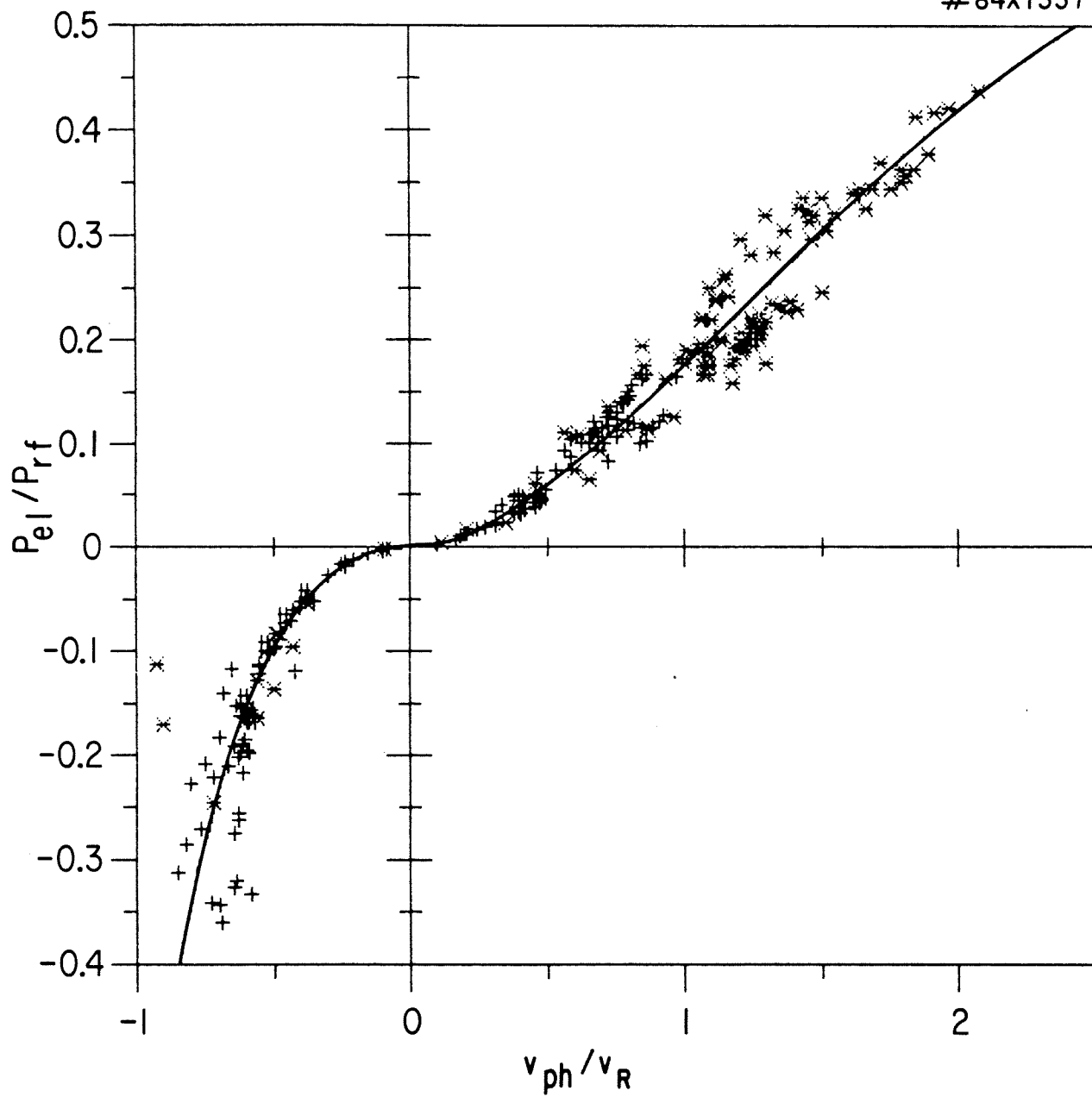


Fig. 1

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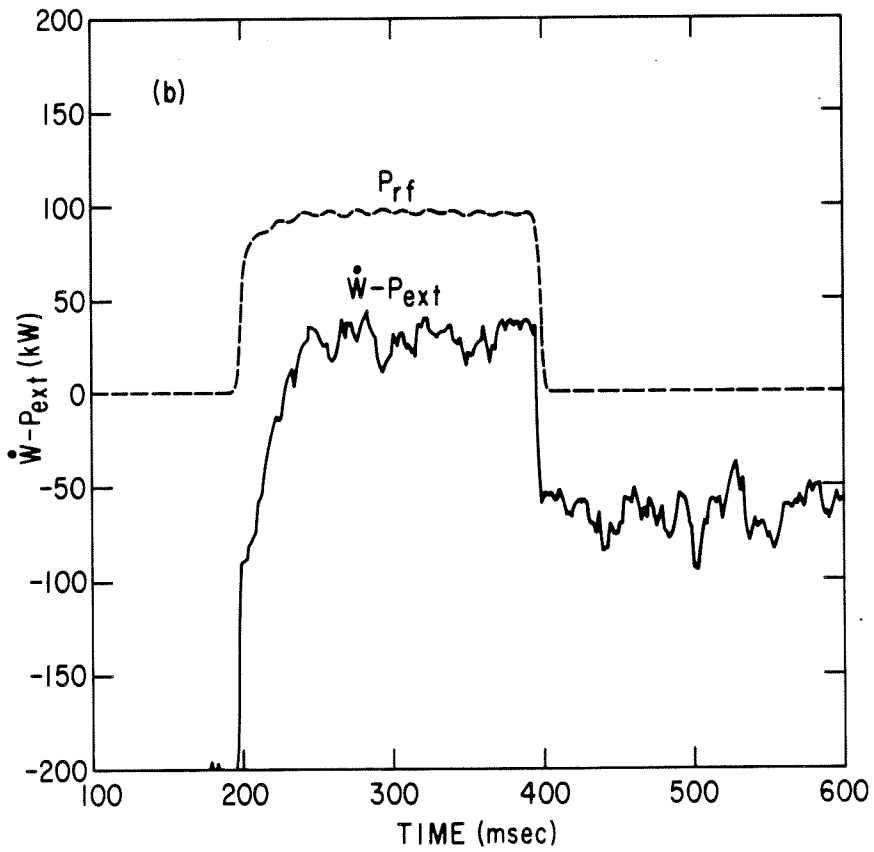
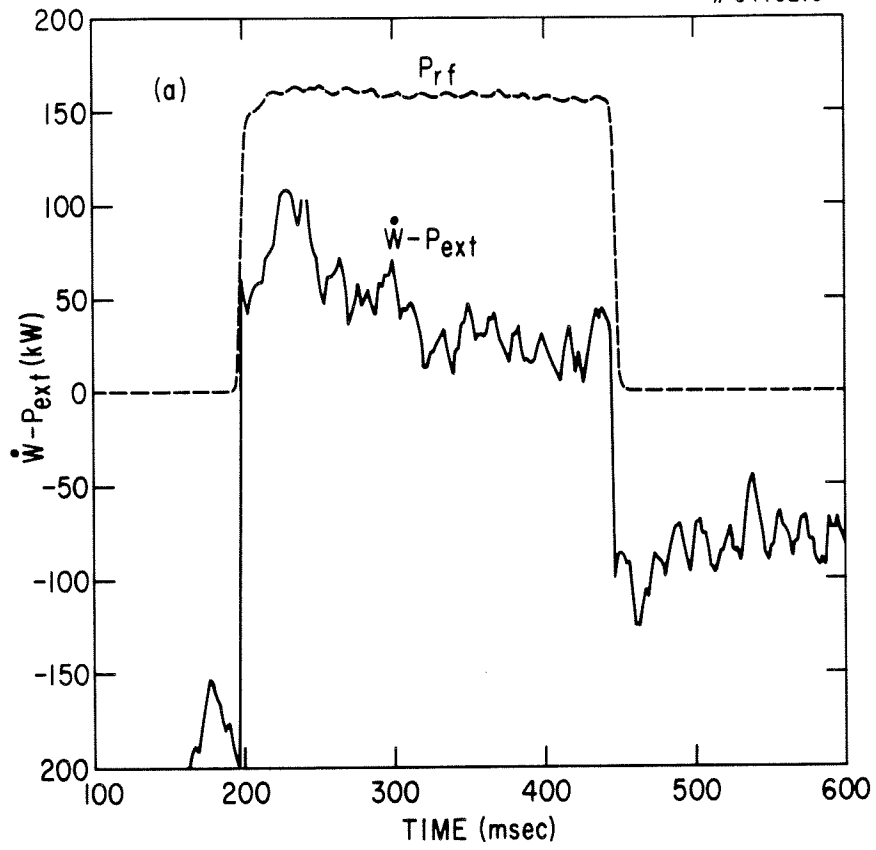


Fig. 2