Cross-field transport and pitch-angle anisotropy of solar energetic particles in MHD turbulence

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Abstract

Recent modelling of solar energetic particles (SEPs) propagation through the heliospheric turbulence, also discussed in this workshop, has investigated the role of the pitch-angle scattering and the perpendicular transport in spreading particles in heliolongitude, as shown by multi-spacecraft measurements (STEREO A/B, ACE, SOHO, etc.) at 1 AU in various energy ranges. In some events the first-order pitch-angle anisotropy of the particles distribution is not-negligible. We calculate the average perpendicular displacement due to the gradient/curvature drift in an inhomogeneous turbulence accounting for pitch-angle dependence for two MHD turbulence models: (a) 3-D isotropic, (b) anisotropic as conjectured by Goldreich-Sridhar. We find in both cases that the drift scales as $(1 - \mu^2)^2$ with the cosine of pitch-angle $\mu$, in contrast with previous models for transport of SEPs. This result can impact the models of propagation of SEPs through the heliosphere.

1 Introduction

In recent years, the multi-spacecraft monitoring by STEREO A/B, ACE, SOHO or Ulysses, has shown that SEP events spread in longitude more than 180° at 1 AU [9] and also in latitude as far as 70° [7]. The interpretation of these measurements invokes two main agents: (1) extended or moving source in the interplanetary medium (CME-driven shocks); (2) strong perpendicular transport across the spiral magnetic field. Measurements of first-order anisotropy suggest that the pitch-angle dependence of the particle distribution is relevant to the interpretation of the longitudinal spread [2]. In situ measurements of longitudinal spread are particularly valuable.

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in that they might probe whether the transport perpendicular to the average magnetic field is dominated by the meandering of the field lines or the transport away from the field lines; this issue has been recently investigated in [5].

Test-particle simulations [4] show that even in a weak three-dimensional isotropic turbulence charged particles decorrelate from the unperturbed magnetic field on a time scale comparable to the gyroperiod. In addition to repeated scattering in the pitch-angle by which particles move back and forth along a given field line, a prompt decorrelation reduces the initial anisotropy of the particles streaming from the source and enhances the angular spread. These results pinpoint to a propagation regime wherein early-time perpendicular transport cannot be neglected.

Recent phenomenological models of charged particle transport in the heliosphere include a dependence of the perpendicular diffusion coefficient on the pitch-angle of the particle velocity with respect to the global average magnetic field \( \langle \mu \rangle \) given by \( \sqrt{1 - \mu^2} \); suggested by a proportionality of the perpendicular diffusion coefficient to the particle gyroradius [2]. Different pitch-angle dependencies were considered in [11].

In this short note we outline the calculation of the perpendicular transport coefficient due to gradient/curvature drift originating from the inhomogeneity of the magnetic turbulence for an anisotropic pitch-angle distribution of the particles. The results for the 3-D isotropic turbulence and the MHD anisotropic turbulence conjectured by [6], hereafter GS95, are compared. In [5] we have calculated the average over an isotropic pitch-angle distribution; in this short note we relax such an assumption. We do not calculate here the contribution to the perpendicular transport due to field line meandering.

2 Gradient/curvature drift transport

2.1 Three-dimensional isotropic

We consider a spatially homogeneous time-independent magnetic field with superimposed fluctuations. The amplitude of the fluctuation \( \delta B \) is assumed to be much smaller than the average field magnitude \( B_0 \). We represent such a magnetic field as \( B(x) = B_0 + \delta B(x) \), with an average component \( B_0 = B_0 e_z \); we assume that the average over field realisations vanishes, \( \langle \delta B(x) \rangle = 0 \), and \( \delta B(x)/B_0 \ll 1 \). We make use of the gyroperiod averaged guiding-center velocity transverse to the field \( B(x) \), i.e., \( \mathbf{V}_G^\perp(t) \), to the first order in \( \delta B(x)/B_0 \), given for a particle of speed \( v \), momentum \( p \)
and charge Ze by
\[ V^G_{\perp}(t) = \frac{vpc}{ZeB} \left[ \frac{1 - \mu^2}{2} \mathbf{B} \times \nabla \mathbf{B} + \mu^2 \mathbf{B} \times (\mathbf{B} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{B} \right] \]  
(1)
where \( \mu \) is the cosine of the pitch-angle with respect to the average field \( B_0 \) \[10, 5\]. The average square transverse displacement of the particle guiding center from the direction of local \( B \) due to drift along the axis \( x_i \), \( d_{D,i}(t) \), at time \( t \) is written as
\[ d_{D,i}(t) = \int_0^t d\xi \langle V_{\perp,i}(t') V_{\perp,i}(t' + \xi) \rangle. \]  
(2)
In the Eq. (1) we make use of the Fourier representation for \( \delta \mathbf{B}(x) \) and assume an inertial range magnetic turbulence power spectrum which is uncorrelated at different wavenumber vectors:
\[ \langle \delta \mathbf{B}_r(k) \delta \mathbf{B}_r^*(k') \rangle = \delta(k - k'). \]  
(3)
As in \[5\] we use
\[ P_{rq}(k) = \frac{G(k)}{8\pi k^2} \left[ \delta l_m - \frac{kq_{km}}{k^2} \right], \]  
(4)
where \( k^{max} \) corresponds to the scale where the dissipation rates of the turbulence overcomes the energy cascade rate, the coherence length is given by \( L = 2\pi/k^{min} \), and the physical scale of the system by \( 2\pi/k^0 \).

With these assumptions, the cross-field diffusion coefficient (limit for large times of the average square displacement) associated to gradient/curvature drift of the guiding center due to the turbulence inhomogeneity (in other words the diffusive motion of the guiding center away from the field lines) reads
\[ D^i_{D}(t) \rightarrow \frac{\pi}{16} \left( \frac{\delta B}{B_0} \right)^2 \frac{q - 1}{q - 2} \frac{2\pi v^3}{L\Omega^2} \left( \frac{1 - \mu^2}{2} \right)^2 \]  
(5)
We note that \( \frac{1}{2} \int_{-1}^{1} d\mu D^i_{D}(t) = d^i_{D}(t) \), where \( d^i_{D}(t) \) is the time-dependent average square displacement in Eq. (45) of \[5\]. The condition that the perpendicular transport time-scale is much shorter than the parallel one is translated into the restriction of Eq. \[5\] to times \( t < 1/k_{min}v_{\parallel} \approx L/2\pi v_{\parallel} \); thus, for higher energy particles the physical time this regime applies is shorter because the perpendicular scale grows with the particle gyroradius \( r_g \) and the perpendicular transport becomes relevant. For a 25 MeV proton (within the energy range of STEREOs and SOHO instruments) at 1 AU, \( (\delta B/B_0)^2 = 0.1, \ r_g/L \approx 0.1 \ (L = 0.01 \text{ AU}) \) and \( q = 11/3 \), we have \( D^i_{D}(t) \approx 4.5 \times 10^{17}(1 - \mu^2)^2 \text{cm}^2 \text{s}^{-1} \) for \( t < 1/k_{min}v_{\parallel} \approx 3.5 \text{ s} \).
2.2 MHD anisotropic turbulence GS95

Also in this case we consider a spatially homogeneous, fluctuating, time-independent global magnetic field $B_0$ and decompose the field as $B(x) = B_0 + \delta B(x)$, with a large-scale average component $B_0 = B_0 e_z$ and a fluctuation $\langle \delta B(x) \rangle = 0$. We assume that the inertial range extends from $L$ down to some scale wherein injected energy ultimately must dissipate. We introduce a scale $\tilde{L}$ such that $r_g \ll \tilde{L} \ll L$. The fluctuations are large compared to the total magnetic field at scale $\sim L$; however, at scales $< \tilde{L}$ the fluctuations are small compared to the local average field, and the first-order orbit theory applies to eddies up to scale $\tilde{L}$. By using similar assumptions, [1] made use of the quasi-linear theory to calculate parallel transport coefficient in GS95.

According to the GS95 conjecture, the pseudo-Alfvén modes are carried passively by the shear-Alfvén modes with no contribution to the turbulence cascade to small scales which is seeded by collisions of shear modes only. [2] shows that the transport perpendicular to the local average field due to gradient/curvature drift is dominated by the power of the pseudo-Alfvén modes along the local average field given by

$$P_{33}(\hat{k}_\|, \hat{k}_\perp) = \frac{\hat{k}_\|^2}{k^2} \Pi(\hat{k}_\|, \hat{k}_\perp), \quad (6)$$

with

$$\Pi(\hat{k}_\|, \hat{k}_\perp) = \frac{\varepsilon N B_0^2}{\ell^{1/3}} \hat{k}_\perp^{-10/3} \exp \left( - \frac{\ell^{1/3} \hat{k}_\|}{k_\perp^{2/3}} \right). \quad (7)$$

where $\hat{k}_\|, \hat{k}_\perp$ indicate wave numbers parallel and perpendicular, respectively, to the local average field, $\ell$ is the outer scale of the pseudo-modes, $\varepsilon$ is the power in the pseudo-relative to shear-modes ($0 < \varepsilon < 1$) and $N$ is a normalisation constant accounting for both polarisation modes given by $N \simeq \frac{1}{4\pi} (\delta B/B_0)^2 (1 + \varepsilon (L/\ell))^{-1}$, that includes also scales between $\tilde{L}$ and $L$, as it can be easily seen that the contribution to the turbulent power from perpendicular scales $\tilde{L} < k_\perp^{-1} < L$ is exponentially suppressed.

Following the calculation in the Appendix of [2], we find that the average square displacement due to gradient/curvature drift is given by

$$D_{B}^2(t) \simeq \frac{1}{8} \left( \frac{\delta B}{B_0} \right)^2 \frac{\varepsilon}{1 + \varepsilon L/\ell} \left( \frac{L}{\ell} \right)^{1/3} \frac{v^4}{\Omega^2 L^2} \Omega t (k_\perp M L)^{2.2} \left( \frac{1 - \mu^2}{2} \right)^2. \quad (8)$$

Due to the lack of space, we omit here the corresponding result for the shear-modes. For a 25 MeV proton at 1 AU, by taking $L = l$, $\varepsilon = 0.5$,
\( (\delta B/B_0)^2 = 0.1 \) and \( (k_M^M)^{-1} \simeq 10^{-5} \) AU, we have \( D_D^2(t) \simeq 2.5 \times 10^{21} (1 - \mu^2)^2 t[s] \text{ cm}^2 \text{s}^{-1} \) for \( t < 1/k_{\parallel}^{\text{min}} v_\parallel \simeq 3.5 \text{s} \). We emphasise that such a drift cumulates for hours, that is the typical time-scale of the longitudinal spread of SEP, resulting in a possibly significant contribution.

3 Conclusions

We have calculated the time-dependent average square displacement \( D_D(t) \) due to gradient/curvature drift for two distinct MHD turbulence models: (a) 3-D-isotropic and (b) anisotropic as conjectured by Goldreich and Sridhar (1995); the assumption of the pitch-angle isotropy of the particle distribution function has been relaxed to account for recently measured first order anisotropy. In both cases, we find \( D_D \propto (1 - \mu^2)^2 \); such a dependence arises from the gradient drift that is proportional to the particle kinetic energy normal to the field \( (p^2_\perp/2m \text{ for a particle of mass } m) \). We conclude that spacecraft data compatible with the scaling \( (1 - \mu^2)^2 \) would support at once the Goldreich-Sridhar conjecture and our model for perpendicular transport. Although drifts cannot be neglected in the interpretation of multi-spacecraft SEP data across the Parker spiral [8], the meandering of the field lines is expected to be larger than drifts in perpendicular transport at scales close to the outer scale. This effect will be assessed in a separate work.

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