Review of Neutrino Mixing and Results from Daya Bay

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Abstract. Experimental observations have established that neutrinos undergo flavor oscillations as they propagate due to quantum mechanical mixing between the mass states and flavor states. The Daya Bay reactor neutrino experiment has observed the disappearance of electron-type antineutrinos from nuclear reactor cores at the Daya Bay nuclear power complex located in China. This observation allowed Daya Bay to make a measurement of the last neutrino mixing angle, which was previously only known to be small in comparison to the other neutrino mixing angles. An overview of the current status of neutrino oscillation measurements will be presented, followed by the most recent results from Daya Bay and prospects for JUNO, a future neutrino experiment in China.

1. Neutrino Oscillations
Neutrino mixing between the three flavor states ($\nu_e$, $\nu_\mu$, $\nu_\tau$) and the mass states ($\nu_1$, $\nu_2$, $\nu_3$) can be described by three mixing angles ($\theta_{12}$, $\theta_{13}$, $\theta_{23}$) and one phase parameter, $\delta$. Due to this mixing, neutrinos undergo flavor oscillations in which a neutrino created in one flavor state can be observed at a later time in a different flavor state. The probability for flavor oscillations depends on the mixing parameters above and the differences in the squared masses of the neutrinos, $\Delta m^2_{21}$ and $\Delta m^2_{31}$, where $\Delta m^2_{ij} = m_i^2 - m_j^2$ and $\Delta m^2_{31} = \Delta m^2_{32} + \Delta m^2_{21}$. All three mixing angles have been measured, as well as the magnitudes of both the mass splittings. The measured values of these parameters are summarized in Table 1. Both the phase parameter $\delta$ and the mass hierarchy (the sign of the larger mass splitting $\Delta m^2_{31}$) are unknown at this time. The octant of $\theta_{23}$ is also an open question, because the current measured values allow for both $\sin^2 \theta_{23} < 0.5$ and $\sin^2 \theta_{23} > 0.5$ within the experimental uncertainties.

Prior to 2012, neutrino experiments had only been able to set limits on the mixing angle $\theta_{13}$. Long-baseline accelerator neutrino experiments can measure $\theta_{13}$ by observing muon neutrino to electron neutrino transitions. The T2K experiment has recently confirmed electron neutrino appearance in a muon neutrino beam with a significance of 7.3$\sigma$ [1]. However, the muon neutrino to electron neutrino transition probability also depends on $\delta$ and the sign of $\Delta m^2_{31}$, both of which are unknown. Another way to measure $\theta_{13}$ is to search for the disappearance of electron antineutrinos from a reactor. The electron antineutrino survival probability in this channel is

$$P_{ee} = 1 - \cos^4 \theta_{13} \sin^2(2\theta_{12}) \sin^2 \Delta_{21} - \sin^2(2\theta_{13})(\cos^2 \theta_{12} \sin^2 \Delta_{31} + \sin^2 \theta_{12} \sin^2 \Delta_{32}),$$

(1)
where $\Delta_{ij} = 1.267\Delta m^2_{31} \frac{L(m)}{E(\text{MeV})}$. At short baselines of around 1 km, the $\sin^2(2\theta_{13})$ term is dominant. Due to the ability to accumulate large statistics in a relatively short amount of time and the lack of dependence on $\delta$ or the mass hierarchy in this channel, a short-baseline reactor experiment is ideal for measuring $\theta_{13}$.

### Table 1. Summary of measured values

| Measured Value | Description                                      |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| $\tan^2 \theta_{12} = 0.44 \pm 7\%$            | Combined solar and KamLAND[2]                   |
| $\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) = 0.084 \pm 6\%$         | Daya Bay                                         |
| $\sin^2 \theta_{23} = 0.51 \pm 11\%$          | T2K[3]                                           |
| $\Delta m^2_{21} = 7.5 \times 10^{-5} \text{eV}^2 \pm 3\%$ | Combined solar and KamLAND[2]                   |
| $|\Delta m^2_{31}| \approx |\Delta m^2_{32}| = 2.4 \times 10^{-3} \text{eV}^2 \pm 4\%$ | MINOS/MINOS+[4], T2K[3], Daya Bay |

### 2. The Daya Bay Experiment

Daya Bay measures the antineutrino spectrum from six reactor cores located at the Daya Bay nuclear power complex in China. The Daya Bay detectors are located underground in experimental halls (EHs) built beneath mountains that provide shielding from cosmic ray background. There are two near sites (EH1 and EH2) close to the reactor cores and one far site (EH3) at a distance of $\sim 2$ km from the cores. Multiple functionally-identical antineutrino detectors (ADs) are placed at each site. The relative near-far measurement between nearly identical ADs allows for the cancellation of detector-related systematic uncertainties. Figure 1 shows a cross-sectional diagram of an AD. The ADs use $\sim 20$ tons of gadolinium-loaded liquid scintillator as a target. Surrounding the target region is $\sim 20$ tons of undoped liquid scintillator to detect gammas that escape the target volume. The outer region of each AD contains $\sim 40$ tons of mineral oil to shield the inner volumes. The three regions are separated by acrylic vessels. The ADs are instrumented with 8-inch photomultiplier tubes (PMTs) mounted on the wall of the containment vessel in the mineral oil region. Reflective panels on the top and bottom increase the light collection and improve the uniformity of the energy response. Three automated calibration units (ACUs) are located on top of the containment vessel. Each ACU contains an LED and radioactive sources that can be lowered into the detector. Antineutrinos are detected via the inverse beta decay (IBD) interaction, $\bar{\nu}_e p \rightarrow e^+ n$. The signal is a coincidence between the prompt energy due to the positron and the delayed energy ($\sim 8$ MeV) due to the neutron capture on gadolinium. The neutron capture time on gadolinium is approximately 30 $\mu$s. A muon system is employed to shield against natural radioactivity and fast neutrons and to tag cosmic muons that produce background in the ADs. The muon veto system consists of an active water shield and resistive plate chambers (RPCs). The ADs are placed inside the water pool such that there is at least 2.5 m of water shielding in every direction. The water pool is instrumented with 8-inch PMTs to detect the Cherenkov light emitted by muons passing through the water. The pool is divided into inner and outer regions separated by reflective Tyvek sheets. The RPC modules are installed on top of the pool.

Two ADs were installed in EH1 and took data for 90 days beginning in August 2011. This data set was used for a side-by-side comparison of ADs that established the residual uncorrelated detector uncertainty [5]. During this period, one AD was installed in EH2 and two ADs were installed in EH3. Beginning in December 2011, data was taken in this 6-AD configuration for a total of 217 days. The first observation of electron antineutrino disappearance at Daya
Bay was based on 55 days of data and measured a non-zero value of $\theta_{13}$ with a significance of $5.2\sigma$ [6]. An updated measurement was published based on 139 days of data [7]. The first spectral measurement by Daya Bay was based on the entire 217 days of data in the 6-AD configuration [8]. In the summer of 2012, the two final ADs were installed and a series of special calibrations were performed. Daya Bay has been taking data with all 8 ADs (two at each near site and four at the far site) since October 2012. The results presented in the next section are based on 621 days of data-taking, including the entire 6-AD period.

3. Recent Results from Daya Bay

IBD interactions are selected by first rejecting events caused by PMT light emission. Candidate events are selected by requiring the coincidence of a prompt signal with energy between 0.7 and 12 MeV and a delayed signal with energy between 6 and 12 MeV within a time window of 1-200 $\mu$s. Candidate coincidences occurring within 0.6 ms of a water pool muon, 1 ms of an AD muon, and 1 s of an AD showering muon are rejected from the sample. A multiplicity cut is performed to ensure that only isolated candidate pairs are selected. In total, Daya Bay has observed more than one million IBD interactions.

The top panel of Figure 2 shows the measured spectrum at the far site compared to the expected spectrum based on the near site data both without oscillations and with the best fit oscillations included. The bottom panel shows the ratio of the measured to expected spectrum. The observed relative rate deficit and relative spectral distortion are highly consistent with the oscillation interpretation.

Because oscillations of reactor antineutrinos at a baseline near 1 km are mostly due to the $\Delta_{3i}$ terms in Equation 1 and $|\Delta m^2_{32}| \ll |\Delta m^2_{31}| \approx |\Delta m^2_{32}|$, we define the effective mass-squared difference $\Delta_{ee} = \cos^2 \theta_{12} \sin^2 \Delta_{31} + \sin^2 \theta_{12} \sin^2 \Delta_{32}$ for the analysis. Figure 3 shows the 68.3%, 95.5%, and 99.7% confidence level allowed regions for $\sin^2(2\theta_{13})$ and $|\Delta m^2_{ee}|$ based on the comparison of the rates and and prompt energy spectra measured by the near site and far

![Figure 1. Diagram of a Daya Bay antineutrino detector.](image-url)
Figure 2. The top panel shows the measured spectrum at the far site compared to the expected spectrum based on the near site data both without oscillations and with the best fit oscillations included. The bottom panel shows the ratio of the measured to expected spectrum. The uncertainties are statistical only.

Daya Bay has also recently announced an independent measurement of $\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) = 0.083 \pm 0.018$ by performing a rate-only analysis using neutron captures on hydrogen ($nH$) during the 217 days of the 6-AD data period. Combining this result with the result based on neutron captures on gadolinium ($nGd$) yields improved precision on $\sin^2(2\theta_{13})$. Because the $nH$ sample has different systematic uncertainties than the $nGd$ sample, results derived from the $nH$ sample will be important in the future when the systematic uncertainty in the $nGd$ sample becomes the dominant uncertainty in $\sin^2(2\theta_{13})$ [9].

A search for a light sterile neutrino has been performed using the 217 days of data from the 6-AD period. A minimal extension of the standard model, the 3 (active) + 1 (sterile) neutrino mixing model, was used in the analysis. The data are consistent with the standard neutrino model and place stringent limits on $\sin^2(2\theta_{14})$ in the region of $10^{-3} \text{ eV}^2 < \Delta m^2_{41} < 0.1 \text{ eV}^2$, a region which was largely unexplored. The precision of this result is dominated by statistics, and the sensitivity to $\sin^2(2\theta_{14})$ is expected to approximately double with three additional years data [10].

4. JUNO

Because the reactor antineutrino disappearance probability depends on both $\Delta m^2_{31}$ and $\Delta m^2_{32}$ as shown in Equation 1, a Fourier transform of the $L/E$ spectrum of reactor antineutrinos could reveal the mass hierarchy [11]. JUNO is a planned next-generation neutrino experiment that will seek to determine the mass hierarchy by a precision measurement of the reactor antineutrino
Figure 3. The 68.3%, 95.5%, and 99.7% confidence level allowed regions for $\sin^2(2\theta_{13})$ and $|\Delta m^2_{ee}|$ based on the comparison of the rates and and prompt energy spectra measured by the near site and far site ADs. The best fit values are indicated by the point. Also shown is the dependence of $\Delta \chi^2$ on each of the parameters.

spectrum at a baseline of 60 km. Unlike long-baseline accelerator neutrino experiments, JUNO’s approach has the advantage of not depending on $\delta$ or $\theta_{23}$. However, very good energy resolution is necessary to achieve the mass hierarchy determination. Figure 4 shows a sketch of the JUNO detector, a 20-kt liquid scintillator detector with nearly 80% photocathode coverage to achieve an energy resolution of $3%/\sqrt{E}$. With six years of data, JUNO’s sensitivity to the mass hierarchy is expected to be at least $3\sigma$. JUNO will have a rich physics program in addition to the mass hierarchy measurement, including precision oscillation parameter measurements, supernova neutrinos, geoneutrinos, solar neutrinos, sterile neutrinos, atmospheric neutrinos, or other exotic searches. Civil construction is expected to begin in 2014, with data-taking scheduled for 2020 [12].

Figure 4. Planned design of the JUNO detector
5. Summary
In summary, Daya Bay has measured $\sin^2(2\theta_{13}) = 0.084 \pm 0.005$ and $|\Delta m^2_{ee}| = 2.44^{+0.10}_{-0.11} \times 10^{-3}$ eV$^2$ with 621 days of data. This is the most precise measurement of $\sin^2(2\theta_{13})$ to date, and the most precise measurement of $|\Delta m^2|$ in this channel, comparable in precision and consistent with the measurements from muon neutrino disappearance experiments. The precision of both parameters is expected to reach 3% with approximately three more years of data.

6. References
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