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A study of the dynamics of the 3D Kelvin-Helmholtz instability in a partially ionised plasma

Andrew Hillier, <u>Naoki Nakamura</u>, Shinsuke Takasao, Harufumi Tamazawa & Akito Davis Kawamura

Kwasan Observatory, Kyoto University

In collaboration with the (P<u>I</u>P) coding team, Kwasan Observatory

Partially (Weakly) ionized plasma in solar physics





The solar photosphere (turbulence & convection). Ionisation fraction $\xi_p \sim 10^{-4} - 10^{-6}$

The solar chromosphere and prominences (waves, reconnection, instabilities and turbulence). Ionisation fraction $\xi_p \sim 10^{-1} - 10^{-3}$

How are neutrals coupled to magnetic fields



① Movement of magnetic field

(2) together with charged particles

③ Charged particles collide with neutrals

④ Neutrals move in the same direction as the charged particles

Perfect coupling $v_{in/ni} = \infty$

strong coupling $v_{in/ni} \gg v_{DYN}$

marginal coupling $v_{in/ni} \sim v_{DYN}$

weak coupling $v_{in/ni} \ll v_{DYN}$

no coupling $v_{in/ni} = 0$



"And the mountains flowed before the Lord"

c.f. Deborah number associated with polymeric fluids

 $De = \frac{t_{RELAX}}{t_{OBS}}$





In solar physics (and astrophysics in general), we are interested in a huge range of temporal and spatial scales. We cannot only think of our "mountains" as "solid" or "fluid"

The (PIP) code



New code to study partially ionized plasma developed at Kyoto University

3D HD and 3D MHD conservative equations solved coupled by collisons (both fluids taken as ideal gases)

$$\frac{\partial \rho_n}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\rho_n \mathbf{v}_n) = 0$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho_n}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\rho_n \mathbf{v}_n) + \nabla \cdot (\rho_n \mathbf{v}_n \mathbf{v}_n + P_n \mathbf{I})$$

$$= -a_c \rho_n \rho_p (\mathbf{v}_n - \mathbf{v}_p)$$

$$\frac{\partial e_n}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\mathbf{v}_n (e_n + P_n)) =$$

$$a_c \rho_n \rho_p \left(\frac{1}{2}(v_p^2 - v_n^2) + 3R_g(T_p - T_n)\right)$$

$$\frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (-\mathbf{v}_p \times \mathbf{B} + \eta \nabla \times \mathbf{B}) = 0$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho_p}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\rho_p \mathbf{v}_p) = 0$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho_p}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\rho_p \mathbf{v}_p) = 0$$

Schemes: Fourth-order central difference (eg Vogler et al 2005) and HLL type (e.g. Miyoshi & Kusano 2005)

MPI parallelized (no complications from collision terms)

Solving for the collision terms

$$\frac{\partial \rho \mathbf{v}}{\partial t} \sim - \upsilon \rho \mathbf{V}_D$$

Two problems are associated with solving this equation:

- 1) This equation is very stiff, meaning that the safety factor for the CFL condition has to be annoyingly small
- 2) When simulating a whole stellar atmosphere, where densities can vary by many orders of magnitude, there will be regions with very high collision frequency that we need to make simulatable

But for strong coupling it is easy to show that $V_D(t) = V_D(t_0)\exp(-\alpha\rho_{TOT}t)$ Which allows for an analytic solution to be give for the integration at timescales below the dynamic timescale

The Magnetic Kelvin-Helmholtz instability in partially ionised plasma

Fundamental instability of astrophysical plasma.

Partially ionized effects have been investigated in molecular clouds (Jones & Downes 2012) and solar prominences (Diaz et al 2012)

All simulations on a 500x500 grid

$$\rho_{TOT} = 2$$

$$V_{DIFF} = 0.9C_{S,N}$$

$$\rho_{TOT} = 1$$

The simulation setup

Ionisation fraction $\xi_i = 0.5$ $\beta = 0.3$ Magnetic field along line of sight

Most cases
$$v_{in} = 100$$



For strong coupling, the instability grows in the two fluids together. As coupling gets weaker a lag develops, and the fluids eventually develop their own growth rates (consistent with linear theory of Soler et al. 2012)



Movie shows ρ_n and ρ_p with the arrows showing velocity vectors for each fluid. Though the similar dynamics develop, the density distributions show stark differences in the centre of the vortex

Neutral depletion at vortex centre



Movie shows ${}^{\rho_p}/_{\rho_n}$ with the arrows showing drift velocity $\mathbf{V}_D = \mathbf{v}_i - \mathbf{v}_n$. Strong regions of neutral depletion form in the vortex centre

Neutral depletion at vortex centre



 ρ_p/ρ_n (left) and vorticity (right). This highlights that though there are many vortices, only the long-lived vortex shows significant depletion



Summary

- The (PIP) code is progressing well and ready for use in scientific research. Work is still in progress to improve its usage on supercomputers
- Application to the Kelvin-Helmholtz instability shows that ionneutral centrifuges are formed in the KH vortex (neutral dust can undergo a similar process c.f. Hendrix and Keppens 2014)
- Inverse cascade (mainly a 2D effect?) can transport the nonideal effects to be important at 'ideal' length/timescales (as suggest by Jones and Downes 2012)