MAGNETIC EFFECTS ON SOLAR p-MODES

W R Campbell and B Roberts
Department of Applied Mathematics
University of St Andrews
St Andrews
Fife
Scotland

ABSTRACT. Both analytical and numerical studies of the effect of a magnetic field at the base of the convection zone on p-modes are presented. It is argued that the recently reported changes in the low degree p-mode frequencies, from 1980 to 1984, may result from corresponding changes in the magnetic field strength. A lower limit of some $5 \times 10^5 - 10^6$ gauss is implied for the field strength at the base of the convection zone.

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid accumulation of ever more accurate data on the frequencies of p-mode oscillations raises the question of the influence of the solar magnetic field on those frequencies. At the photospheric level in the solar atmosphere the magnetic field is confined to isolated flux tubes. The field is concentrated to equipartition pressures with the confining external gas, yielding field strengths of around 1.5kG (compared with 2-3kG in sunspots). Above the photosphere these isolated intense flux tubes rapidly fan out to fill the chromosphere and corona, where they dominate the force balance (see Parker, 1979; Spruit and Roberts, 1983 for recent reviews). Below the photosphere the structure and, more specifically, the field strength is less certain, though there are arguments (Parker, 1975; Spiegel and Weiss, 1980; Galloway and Weiss, 1981; van Ballegooijen, 1982 a,b) for the existence of a relatively stable magnetic layer, evolving over the solar cycle, located just below the base of the convection zone.

Here we examine the role played by a field anchored at the base of the convection zone. For mathematical simplicity we consider a plane stratified atmosphere within which is embedded a horizontal magnetic field. In such a geometry we are able to present both an explicit dispersion relation (albeit a complex one) and a supporting, more approximate, WKB treatment, thus elucidating the role of the
field on the p-modes.

As an application of our analysis we consider the possibility that a magnetic field, evolving over the solar cycle, is responsible for the systematic frequency shifts in low degree p-modes recently reported by Woodard and Noyes (1985) and Elsworth et al. (1986). These reports refer to two separate data sets, one from ACRIM and the other from ground-based sites. Woodard and Noyes report a 0.42µHz frequency decrease, over the period 1980 to 1984, in the l=0 and l=1 modes; by contrast, Elsworth et al. report an increase of 0.72µHz in the l=0 mode over the same period, and no significant shift in the l=1 mode.

The analysis we present here (see also Roberts and Campbell, 1986) allows us to argue that the p-mode frequency would decrease (increase) if the field at the base of the convection zone decreased (increased) over the period 1980–1984, corresponding to moving from solar maximum to minimum. In either case, a field strength of some $5 \times 10^5 - 10^6$ gauss is implied.

2. MAGNETIC EFFECTS

2.1. The Dispersion Relation

We model the solar interior as a field-free polytrope above an isothermal magnetic 'core', and consider linear adiabatic motions of frequency $\sigma$ and horizontal wavenumber $k$. The dynamics of the field-free region ($0 < z < z_C$) is governed by Lamb's equation (Lamb, 1932; Sect. 312).

In the magnetic region ($z > z_C$) the vertical velocity $u_z$, satisfies the equation (Adam, 1977; Nye and Thomas, 1976)

$$u''_z + A_1(z) u'_z + A_0(z) u_z = 0,$$

(1)

where

$$A_1(z) = \frac{\gamma g z}{(c_e^2 + v_A^2(z))(\sigma^2 - k^2 c_T^2(z))},$$

$$A_0(z) = \frac{(\sigma^2 - k^2 c_e^2)(\sigma^2 - k^2 v_A^2(z)) + (\gamma - 1)g^2k^2}{(c_e^2 + v_A^2(z))(\sigma^2 - k^2 c_T^2(z))},$$

for constant sound speed $c_e$, Alfvén speed $v_A(z)$ and cusp speed $c_T(z) = c_e v_A/(c_e^2 + v_A^2)^{1/2}$.

The solution of equation (1) in the 'local approximation' is

$$\hat{u}_z(z) \sim e^{\lambda (z - z_C)},$$

(2)

where $\lambda$, satisfying $\lambda^2 + A_1 \lambda + A_0 = 0$, is chosen so that the solution is vertically evanescent. This requires that $A_1^2 - 4A_0 > 0$. 

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Matching across the magnetic interface \( z = z_c \) by imposing the continuity of \( u_z \) and the total pressure perturbation gives the dispersion relation

\[
\left( \frac{c_s^2 + v_A^2}{\lambda} \right) (\sigma^2 - k^2 c_T^2) + g k^2 c_s^2 \right) \left[ g k^2 c_s^2 + \sigma^2 k c_s^2 - \gamma \sigma^2 g \right.
\]

\[
- \sigma^2 c_s^2 \frac{M'(-a,m+2,2kz_c)}{M(-a,m+2,2kz_c)} \right] = \frac{\rho_0(z_c^-)}{\rho_0(z_c^+)} \frac{c_s^2(\sigma^2 - k^2 c_s^2)(\sigma^2 - k^2 g^2)}{\rho_0(z_c^-)}.
\]

(3)

Here \( m \) is the polytropic index, \( M \) is Kummer's function of the first kind, and \( \rho_0(z) \) the gas density. Equation (3) is solved numerically for various values of the magnetic field strength \( B_0 \), and exhibits the usual \( \sigma^2 - k \) parabolae, changed only slightly by the presence of the field. Figure 1 shows the behaviour of \( \Delta \nu \), the difference in cyclic frequency \( \nu = \sigma/2\pi \) in the presence of a field \( B_0 \) and in its absence. We note that a field of order \( 10^6 \text{G} \) is required for \( \Delta \nu \) to be of order \( 0.5 \mu\text{Hz} \).

![Figure 1. The increase \( \Delta \nu \) in cyclic frequency \( \nu = \sigma/2\pi \) of the p-mode brought about by a field \( B_0 = 10^6 \text{G} \).](image-url)
2.2 WKB Analysis

Complementary to the analysis of a dispersion relation, it is of interest to consider a WKB analysis. To do this it is convenient to derive the magnetic form of Lamb's equation and express it in canonical form. Of particular interest is the high frequency ($\sigma \gg \kappa v_A$) case, which yields

$$ \phi'' + \kappa^2 \phi = 0, \tag{4} $$

where

$$ \kappa^2 = -k^2 + \frac{\sigma^2}{c_s^2 + v_A^2} + \frac{k^2 c_s^2 v_A^2}{(c_s^2 + v_A^2)^2} - \frac{\omega_g^2}{c_s^2} + \frac{k^2 \omega_g^2}{\sigma^2} \left( \frac{c_s^2}{c_s^2 + v_A^2} \right). \tag{5} $$

In the above, $\omega_C$ and $\omega_g$ are the usual Lamb and buoyancy frequencies (see, e.g., Deubner and Gough, 1984) and $\phi \sim \rho_0^2 (c_s^2 + v_A^2) \Delta$, for sound speed $c_s(z)$ and Alfvén speed $v_A(z)$. Expression (5) is exact if $\kappa, v_A$ or $g$ are zero.

Applying the usual WKB arguments to (4) and taking a mean value $\beta$ for $c_s^2/v_A^2$ we obtain (see also Roberts and Campbell, 1986).

$$ \nu_B - \nu_0 = \frac{1}{2\beta} \nu_0, \tag{6} $$

where $\nu_B$ is the frequency in the presence of a magnetic field $B$ and $\nu_0$ its value in the field's absence. Hence, the presence of a field increases the frequency above its zero field value in proportion to the square of the field strength (see also Bogdan and Zweibel, 1985).

Suppose, now, that the field changes from $B$ to $B'$, with a corresponding frequency change of $\nu_B - \nu_{B'}$. Then (6) yields

$$ B^2 - B'^2 = \frac{8\pi c_s^2}{\nu_0} (\nu_B - \nu_{B'}). \tag{7} $$

As an illustration, taking $\rho_0 = 0.2$ g cm$^{-3}$ and $c_s = 2 \times 10^7$ cm s$^{-1}$ as typical of conditions near the base of the convection zone we obtain $B^2 - B'^2 = 6.5 \times 10^{17}$ gauss$^2$. Thus, to reproduce frequency changes of the magnitude reported we require a peak field of at least $5 \times 10^5$ G, a result consistent with the analysis in Section 2.1.

3. DISCUSSION

The analysis of the previous sections makes clear that a peak field at least $5 \times 10^5$ G must reside at the base of the convection zone if it is responsible for the recently reported (Woodard and Noyes, 1985; Elsworth et al., 1986) phase shifts in p-mode frequencies. The actual change in field strength, over the solar cycle, necessary to reproduce phase shifts of the order reported depends upon the magnitude of the peak field. For example, a peak field of $7 \times 10^5$ G
declining to $5 \times 10^5$ G, from 1980 to 1984, reproduces the frequency
decrease reported by Woodard and Noyes, while a peak field of $10^6$ G
would need to decline to $8.6 \times 10^5$ G. If the magnetic field below the
base of the convection zone is in fibril form (e.g. van Ballegooijen,
1982 a,b) then somewhat stronger fields are necessary; fields of at
least $10^6$ G are required.

Altogether, then, we have pointed out that variations of magnetic
field strength at the base of the convection zone produce frequency
shifts in p-modes. Measurement of such shifts in frequency offer the
possibility of determining magnetic field strengths deep below the
solar surface. The frequency shifts between 1980 and 1984 reported by
Woodard and Noyes (1985) and Elsworth et al. (1986) offer an intriguing
beginning, though clearly a more extensive data set taken over a
larger fraction of the solar cycle is necessary before any firm
conclusions can be drawn.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WRC is grateful for support from the Department of Education for
Northern Ireland and from the IAU. BR thanks Professor J V Hollweg
and colleagues for their hospitality during his stay in Durham, New
Hampshire, and is grateful for support by NASA through grant
NSG-7411.

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