



F61 Nuclear magnetic resonance

Long Report

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Abstract

In this experiment we started by studying the basics of magnetic excitation. In particular, we wanted to understand how exactly nuclear spins are excited to perform Larmor precession. We measured the relaxation time in the first part of the experiment. In the second part, we identified different substances by comparing the measured shifts of the Larmor frequency caused by different molecular structures. Lastly, we used nuclear magnetic resonance and different imaging methods to take pictures of several objects, analogously to the medical MRI treatment.

Contents

1. Theoretical Basics

Basics and the relaxation time

In an applied external magnetic field, existing magnetic moments of the atomic nuclei in a material align themselves along the external magnetic field, parallel or anti-parallel. The corresponding energy splitting is given by the scalar product of magnetic moment and external magnetic field in the form

$$\Delta E = -\boldsymbol{\mu} \cdot \boldsymbol{B}_0. \quad (1)$$

The parallel alignment is energetically lower. The proton population numbers correctly described by the Fermi-Dirac statistics can be approximated classically by the Boltzmann distribution. The ratio of the two occupation numbers with parallel and antiparallel alignment is then given by

$$\frac{N_+}{N_-} = e^{\frac{2\Delta E}{k_B T}}. \quad (2)$$

An estimate in which the magnetic moment is approximately one Bohr's magneton and the magnetic field is approximately 1 T results in a difference between the two occupation numbers of approximately one per thousand at room temperature. The total magnetization results from the sum of these thousandth part over the whole substance. In general, the following applies from the electrodynamics for the resulting torque from a magnetic field and a magnetization

$$\boldsymbol{\tau} = \boldsymbol{M} \times \boldsymbol{B}_0. \quad (3)$$

For (anti-)parallel alignment, the torque is zero. As soon as B_0 and M span a plane, the resulting torque rotates the magnetization around the axis of the magnetic field with the Larmor frequency

$$\omega_L = \gamma B_0. \quad (4)$$

Now we create a second magnetic field B_1 orthogonal to a relatively strong external magnetic field B_0 . Before the magnetization can align itself along the new total magnetic field B_{tot} , the Larmor precession around this begins. If the magnetic field B_1 oscillates with the Larmor frequency of the atomic nuclei, the magnetization can be deflected, as schematically shown in Figure ?? . With the duration of the applied high-frequency magnetic field B_1 we can determine the angle by which the magnetization is deflected compared to the external magnetic field B_0 . In particular, so-called 90° and 180° pulses can be generated, which generate an orthogonal or antiparallel magnetisation to B_0 from a parallel magnetisation. For these excited states of magnetization, the Bloch equations result in an asymptotic drop on characteristic time scales for antiparallel and orthogonal magnetization respectively T_1 and T_2 :

$$M_{\parallel}(t) = M_0 \cdot \left(1 - 2e^{-\frac{t}{T_1}}\right) \quad (5)$$

$$M_{\perp}(t) = M_0 \cdot e^{-\frac{t}{T_2}} \quad (6)$$

The decay of the anti-parallel magnetization is caused by the interaction of the spins with the external magnetic field B_0 (spin-grating changer effect), whereas interactions between the individual spins (spin-spin interaction) lead to the decay of the parallel magnetization. Since the spin-spin interaction is stronger than the spin-grating interaction, $T_2 \leq T_1$ is expected. Measurements of orthogonal magnetization are made in the B_1 generating coil by induction. After switching off the B_1 field, the precession of the magnetization around the external magnetic field B_0 induces an alternating current in the B_1 coil. This can be measured on a connected oscilloscope. In our setup, the output signal of the induction coil leads back again into the signal generator, which generates the high-frequency alternating field B_1 , and only then into the readout devices. Thus we see the final signal as a superposition of the signal frequency and the alarm frequency, which shows the sum and difference of the two frequencies. We also call the difference the operating frequency, which is a few hundred hertz; this difference is in the per thousand range relative to the larmor frequency of hydrogen nuclei (about 20 MHz). The relaxation time T_1 can be measured by first passing a 180° pulse an antiparallel orientation of the magnetization is caused and then after different time intervals a 90° pulse generates a signal in the induction coil whose amplitude is proportional to the magnitude of the antiparallel magnetization of before the 90° pulse. By recording these amplitudes after different times, the exponential decrease of the antiparallel magnetization can be investigated and T_1 determined. The relaxation time T_2 is measured by another combination of 90° and 180° pulses: First a 90° pulse produces a magnetization perpendicular to the B_0 field, which because of this field begins to precessionize this axis with the Larmor frequency. However, the external magnetic field is designed so that the magnetic field strength varies in the direction of the magnetic field vector.

Because the Larmor frequency by equation ?? depends on it, the frequency at different coordinates is also different, which after a certain time results in a phase difference at the different coordinates. This incoherence reduces the amplitude of the induced field in the coil. After a certain period of time τ a 180° pulse is sent, which causes a mirroring around 180° on an axis perpendicular to the axis of the B_0 field around which the magnetization rotates (see Fig. ??). The consequence of this mirroring is that the nuclei that were previously in phase after the other nuclei are now at the same phase angle in front of them. The previous phase difference was due to the precession during a time τ had arisen. By mirroring through the 180° pulse, after a further precession period of τ , the nuclei are all in phase again and thus show a maximum induction current. This allows the magnitude decrease to be measured over a period of 2τ . Now you can always use different values for τ and measure the decrease of the amplitude after twice the time to reconstruct the exponential decrease and so T_2 . This measuring method is called spin-echo method. Alternatively, another 180° pulse can be sent to all odd multiples of time τ so that a maximum induction current is measured at all even multiples of τ and the relaxation time can be determined from this. This sequence of one 90° and several 180° pulses is called the Carr-Purcell sequence. The basic procedure of the process described here is shown in figure ?? is illustrated.

Chemical Shift

When considering the excitation of nuclear spins, only atoms that actually have a nuclear spin can be excited; i. e. $S \neq 0$. Of course, a single proton as fermion in the nucleus of a hydrogen atom has a spin of $S = 1/2$. On the other hand, for a carbon atom, for example, $S = 0$, so there is no magnetic moment at all that could contribute to magnetization. Additionally, note that the 90° and 180° pulses are always adjusted to a noise frequency. In order to achieve an effective excitation of nuclear spins of different atoms, the gyromagnetic ratio must also be the same. If we expose a sample of organic material to only one frequency that excites hydrogen nuclei, only the hydrogen atoms of an organic material will contribute to the measured larmor frequency. In different molecules the hydrogen molecules are present in different bonds with different electronegativity differences, which means that the probability of residence of the electrons around the proton is not always the same. Due to this difference, the externally applied magnetic field B_0 is also shielded to different degrees by the electron, which results in a slightly different larmor frequency.

$$\delta B = -\sigma B_0 \quad (7)$$

Imaging Techniques

Frequency Coding

Phase Coding

Two dimensional imaging

2. Measurements Log and Evaluation

First Part: Spectroscopy of the Zeeman effect

3. Critical Comment