

A Possibility for Electron Capture in Low-Energy Nuclear Reactions

Ryoji Furui

Nano Fusion Design

info@nanofusion.design

Abstract

We explore the possibility of electron capture by protons as a means to trigger low-energy nuclear reactions (LENR), which could potentially produce neutrons in research settings.

1. Formulation

In this section, we present a calculation of electron capture (EC) based on energy-momentum conservation before and after the EC event. We consider the interaction of EC as follows:

$$p + e \rightarrow n + \nu_e \quad (1)$$

Where a proton p captures an electron e , then a neutron n and a neutrino ν_e is produced. In this calculation, we set a condition before EC that the proton is at rest and the electron moves towards the proton with velocity v . After EC, we set the neutron to be at rest and the neutrino to not be produced. Therefore, we can derive the minimum energy required for EC. The total energy-momentum E before EC is calculated by applying relativistic velocity to the electron and electric potential energy, which is given by:

$$E = m_p c^2 + m_e c^2 \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - \left(\frac{v}{c}\right)^2}} + k \frac{e_p e_e}{r} \quad (2)$$

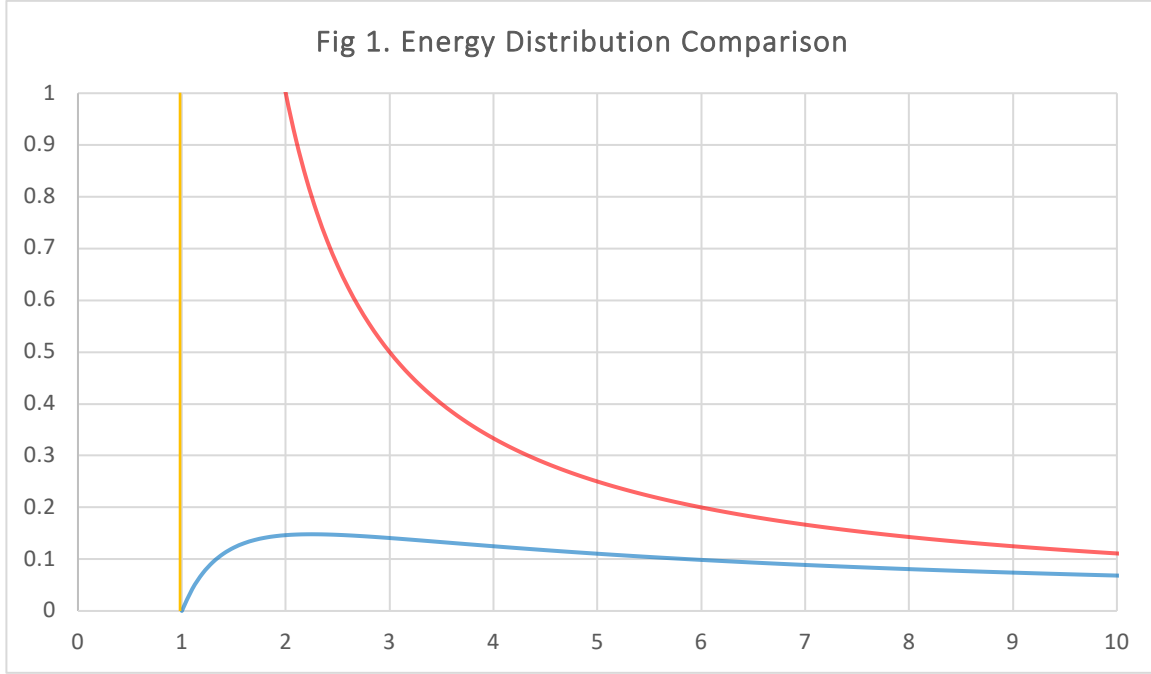
In this equation, m_p represents the mass of a proton, c is the speed of light, m_e is the mass of an electron, k is the Coulomb constant, e_p is the charge of a proton, e_e is the charge of an electron, and r represents the distance of separation between the two particles.

As r approaches zero, the total energy becomes infinite. This infinite problem remains unanswered. To accurately calculate the EC, we cannot ignore this phenomenon. In this paper, we employ a solution for the gravitational potential energy proposed by Fischer [1], which expresses the energy distribution as $\sqrt{1 - r_s/r}$, where r is the distance from the center of the object and r_s is the Schwarzschild radius. We modify equation (2) by replacing the electron radius r_s with the proton radius r_p .

$$E = m_p c^2 + m_e c^2 \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - \left(\frac{v}{c}\right)^2}} + k \frac{e_p e_e}{r} \sqrt{1 - \frac{r_p}{r}} \quad (3)$$

2. Energy Distribution Comparison

Before plugging in values to equation (3), we will examine how the energy distribution is affected as shown in Figure 1. We plot the horizontal axis on r , substituting $r_p = 1$, and the vertical axis on the simplified electric potential function $\sqrt{1 - 1/r}/r$ shown in blue, compared with $1/(r - 1)$ which is represented in red. As the electron approaches the proton, we observe a significant difference in the potential distribution. The red line exhibits an increasing divergence as it gets closer to the proton's surface, which is depicted by the yellow line. On the other hand, the blue curve shows a decrease in value and approaches zero once it reaches the surface.



3. Calculation

Finally, we input the values into equation (3). Our estimate of the total energy-momentum before EC is equal to the neutron's mass after EC, which we represent as E . To acquire the electron's velocity v that triggers EC, we set neutron mass $m_n = 1.6749 * 10^{-27}$ kg, where $E = m_n c^2$, $m_p = 1.6726 * 10^{-27}$ kg, $m_e = 9.1094 * 10^{-31}$ kg, $e_p = 1.60 * 10^{-19}$ C, $e_e = -1.60 * 10^{-19}$ C, $r_p = 1 * 10^{-15}$ m, $k = 9 * 10^9$ N * m^2 / c^2 , $c = 3 * 10^8$ m / s. We set $r = 2.3 * r_p$ since this value is approximately the maximum potential, as shown in Fig 1.

From this, we obtain $v = 234,770$ km / s. The velocity of electrons is still 78% of the speed of light. This is higher than the typical velocity of electrons at LENR sites. If we remove Fischer's factor, as specified in Equation (2), then there will be a chance for EC to occur with any value of v .

Our interpretation of infinite potential in classical terms corresponds to the 100% probability of the event in quantum mechanics, suggesting that EC occurs when the electron settles onto the surface of the proton.

Finally, our analysis suggests that optimizing the condensation of both electrons and protons at moderate energy levels may activate the Coulomb force and increase EC, which could result in the formation of LENRs. We plan to investigate this phenomenon more thoroughly by computer simulations in future research.

References

- [1] Ernst Fischer, Does gravitational collapse lead to singularities?
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