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The low temperature and high density ignition in the helical reactor FFHR2m based on LHD experiments

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Abstract New control method of the unstable operating point in the helical reactor FFHR makes the ignition study on the high density and low temperature operation possible. It is a proportional-integration-derivative (PID) control of the fueling with the error of the fusion power of $e(P_f) = -(P_{fo}-P_f)$, which can stabilize the unstable operating point. Here $P_{fo}(t)$ is the fusion power set value and $P_f(t)$ is the measured fusion power. Although the large parameter variation would lose its control due to the inherently unstable nature, it is still possible to control the ignited operation with pellet injection if the pellet size is smaller than 16 mm. As sensitivity analysis on other parameters makes the helium ash confinement time ratio crucial, preliminary experimental results on helium ash measurement in LHD are also presented. We finally discovered that major plasma parameters for 1.9 GW fusion power are close to plasma parameters independently achieved in LHD experiments.

1. Introduction

Remarkable result of the super dense core (SDC) plasma up to 1.1×10^{21} m⁻³ has been obtained in recent large helical device (LHD) pellet injection experiments [1][2]. In Wenderstein 7-AX, the high density H-mode with 4×10^{20} m⁻³ has also been produced [3]. Such low temperature and high density operation is generally advantageous to reduce the divertor heat flux in both tokamak and helical reactors. However, an operation in the low temperature and high-density ignition regime usually suffers from the thermal instability, where the operating point moves to the higher or lower temperature side. New control algorithm using the simple PID control on fueling has been proposed to overcome the thermal instability in the LHD type helical reactor (FFHR2m) [4]. Owing to the simple and comprehensive algorithm which does not need any linearization of the particle and power balance equations, this control method can be implemented in a reactor where fusion power measurement provides the feedback signals for PID control of fueling.

Many stabilizing methods of the thermally unstable ignition have been proposed so far, using such as fueling [5], impurity injection [6] and heating power modulations [7], and these combinations. In these controls, 0-dimensional equations of the particle and power balance equations have been linearized around the unstable operating point, and then stabilizing techniques such as H-infinity control [8], non-linear control method [9], and neural network control [10] have been applied. In these methods, linearization is necessary in many equations and hence it may be difficult to apply it to the actual situation. In the previous studies, only stabilization around the unstable operating point has been shown, but the access to the unstable operating point from the zero temperature and zero density has not been demonstrated.

In this work we have found that although the large parameter variation would lose its control due to the inherently unstable nature, control can be done for various disturbances to some extents. We have also demonstrated that a fueling at the discrete time for simulating the pellet injection can control the ignition access and steady state operation at the thermally unstable regime despite its oscillatory nature using PID pellet fueling control. We finally discovered that major plasma parameters for FFHR2m with 1.9 GW fusion power output are

close to plasma parameters independently achieved in LHD experiments [1].

2. Zero-dimensional equations and density profiles of SDC plasma

In this analysis, the global power balance equation is used,

$$\frac{dW}{dt} = P_{EXT} - \left(P_L + P_B + P_S - P_\alpha\right) \tag{1}$$

where P_{EXT} is the external heating power, P_L is the total plasma conduction loss, P_B is the total bremsstrahlung loss, P_S is the total synchrotron radiation loss, which is negligible in the low temperature operation, and P_{α} is the total alpha heating power. The ISS95 confinement scaling is used for the plasma conduction loss where γ_{ISS} represent the confinement enhancement factors over the ISS95 scaling. POPCON is the contour map of the heating power of $P_{HT} = (P_L + P_B + P_S - P_{\alpha})$ plotted on the n-T plane. Sudo density limit scaling on the line density of the core plasma with the density limit factor of γ_{SUDO} =5.5 is used as a measure of density. The external heating power is preprogrammed during the whole discharge, because it is difficult to use the density limit scaling for feedback control of the external heating power. This is different from operations on stable ignition boundary [11]. In the power balance equation the equal ion and electron temperature was assumed due to very high density.

The combined particle balance equation using the charge neutrality condition is

$$\frac{dn_e(0)}{dt} = \frac{1}{1 - 8f_o} \left[(1 + \alpha_n) S_{DT}(t) - \left\{ \frac{f_D + f_T}{\tau_p^*} + \frac{2f_\alpha}{\tau_\alpha^*} \right\} n_e(0) \right]$$
(2)

where f_o is the impurity fraction, α_n is the density profile factor, S_{DT} is the D-T fueling rate, f_D is the deuterium fraction, f_T is the tritium fraction, f_α is the alpha ash fraction, τ_p^* is the D-T fuel particle confinement time, and τ_α^* is the He ash confinement time. The helium ash confinement time ratio of $\tau_\alpha^*/\tau_E=3$, and the fuel particle confinement tome ratio of $\tau_p^*/\tau_E=3$ have been used in the helium ash particle balance equation unless otherwise noted. We assumed the box type density profile for SDC plasma using hyperbolic tangent as shown in Fig. 1, and used the broad temperature profile with $\alpha_T=0.25$ as observed in LHD experiments [3].



FIG. 1. Assumed SDC density and temperature profiles.

2. Unstable ignition control algorithm and pellet size

Stable ignition in FFHR reactor is controlled by the continuous D-T fueling rate:

$$S_{DT}(t) = S_{DT0} \left\{ e_{DT}(P_f) + \frac{1}{T_{int}} \int_0^t e_{DT}(P_f) dt + T_d \frac{de_{DT}(P_f)}{dt} \right\} G_{fo}(t)$$
(3)

where the PID control is used based on the fusion power error of $e_{DT}(P_f) = +(1-P_f/P_{fo})$. where $P_{fo}(t)$ is the fusion power set value and $P_f(t)$ is the measured fusion power [11]. However, in the unstable regime, $e_{DT}(P_f) = -(1-P_f/P_{fo})$ can stabilize the thermal instability [4].

This behavior is understood as shown in POPCON in Fig. 2 for the continuous fueling. When P_f is larger than P_{fo} , the operating point (A) moves toward the higher density and lower temperature side. This operating point slightly shifts to the higher temperature side due to ignition nature between (A) and (B). When it enters in the sub-ignition regime (B), it goes to the lower temperature side due to sub-ignition

nature and crosses the constant P_{fo} line (C). The fueling is now decreased and the operating point proceeds to the lower density and higher temperature side, and goes into the ignition regime (D), and crosses the constant P_{fo} line. Thus, oscillations take place and are damped away.

On the other hand, for pellet injection the fueling is digitized. Fueling rate is given by

$$\begin{cases} S_{DT}(t) = S_{DTpellet} & for \ Error(P_f) > 0 \\ S_{DT}(t) = 0 & for \ Error(P_f) \le 0 \end{cases}$$

where $S_{DTpellet}$ is the fueling rate by one pellet as given below, and $Error(P_f)$ is the PID signal based on the fusion power error of $e_{DT}(P_f) = -(1-P_f/P_{fo})$ as

$$Error(P_{f}) = \left\{ e_{DT}(P_{f}) + \frac{1}{T_{int}} \int_{0}^{t} e_{DT}(P_{f}) dt + T_{d} \frac{de_{DT}(P_{f})}{dt} \right\}$$



FIG. 2. Schematic movement of the operating point around the unstable ignition point on POPCON.

As the D-T solid molar volume is 19.88 mm³/mol [12], D-T ice density is given by $\{6.02x10^{23}x2\}/19.88 \text{ [mm^3/mol]}=6.05x10^{28} \text{ m}^{-3}$. For the pellet size of $L_p=12 \text{ mm}$ diameter and $L_p=12 \text{ mm}$ length, the total D-T particle number is $N_{pell}=\pi(L_p/2)^2L_px6.05x10^{28}=82x10^{21} \text{ m}^{-3}$. Therefore, fueling rate per volume is $S_{DTpell}=N_{pell}/V_p=0.99x10^{20} \text{ m}^{-3}/(1 \text{ pellet pulse})$ (see Fig 3-(d)). For the pellet size of 14 mm and 16 mm diameter, $S_{DTpell}=1.57x10^{20} \text{ m}^{-3}/(1 \text{ pellet pulse})$ (see Fig 7-(d)) and $S_{DTpell}=2.35x10^{20} \text{ m}^{-3}/(1 \text{ pellet pulse})$ (see Fig 5-(d)) are obtained, respectively. Minimum repetition time of pellet injection is 240 ms. Detailed pellet injection algorithm was described in the reference 13.

3. Ignition access of the unstable operating point with pellet injection

Figure 3 shows the temporal evolution of plasma parameters for the pellet size of $L_p=12$ mm in FFHR2m with R=14 m, \bar{a} =1.73 m, B_o=6 T, P_f=1.9 GW and γ_{ISS} =1.6. For the fusion power rise-up time of $\Delta \tau_{rise}$ =20 sec and the maximum external heating power of P_{EXT}=80 MW, the time averaged density is initially built up to $\sim 0.6 \times 10^{21}$ m⁻³ by the density feedback (NGW trace) until 12.8 s and then raised up to $n(0) \sim 1 \times 10^{21} \text{ m}^{-3}$ by the fusion power control switched on at 12.8 s. The external heating power is preprogrammed to decrease it to 0 at 24 sec because the feedback control is not used as in the stable operation. We see that even by fueling at the discrete time the ignition access is possible. When the density is increased by one pellet, the temperature is dropped. Their variations are out of phase due to adiabatic process in a short time. We found that the density variation of $\Delta n \sim 2.5 \times 10^{19} \text{ m}^{-3}$ is allowed for ignited operation. The time averaged peak temperature at the steady state is $T_i(0) \sim 6.4$ keV, the volume averaged beta value is $\langle\beta\rangle\sim 2.5$ %, the helium ash fraction is 5.4 %, the effective charge is $Z_{eff} \sim 1.52$, the average neutron wall loading is $\Gamma_n \sim 1.5$ MW/m², the ratio of the bremsstrahlung loss power P_B to the alpha heating power P_{α} is $P_B/P_a \sim 71$ %, reducing the divertor heat load to $\Gamma_{div} \sim 5.4 \text{ MW/m}^2$ for the 10cm width of the divertor plate. Other parameters are also listed in Table 1. As the confinement time is increased due to high-density operation, the plasma conduction loss P_L is reduced.

In Fig. 4 is shown the operation path to the unstable ignition point on POPCON

corresponding to Fig. 3. The operation is stabilized by cooling with fueling and by heating with the fueling reduction, which is controlled by the error of the fusion power $e_{DT}(P_f) = -(1 - P_f/P_{fo})$. We see that the operating point never go beyond 6.3 keV, which may avoid the neo-classical transport.



FIG. 3. Temporal evolution of the plasma parameters with pellet injection with pellet size of 12 mm. (a) Peak temperature, peak density, density limit, (b) alpha ash fraction, fusion power and its set value, (c) density limit margin, beta value, and (d) D-T pellet fueling rate, and the heating power. T_d =0.26s and T_{int} =8s.



FIG. 4. The operation path to the unstable ignition point on POPCON corresponding to Fig. 3.

For the larger pellet size of 16 mm, temporal evolution and POPCON are shown in Fig. 5 and Fig. 6, respectively. The density variation becomes as large as $\Delta n \sim 8 \times 10^{19} \text{ m}^{-3}$, but



FIG. 5. Temporal evolution of the plasma parameters with the pellet size is 16 mm. (a) -(d) are the same as in Fig. 3,



FIG. 6. The operation path to the unstable ignition point on POPCON corresponding to Fig. 5.

ignition is still maintained. The variation of the fusion power is also increased. In POPCON, the operation point oscillates almost in parallel with the constant beta line. This means that control cannot be done by the beta value. For the larger pellet size of 17 mm, the density

variation is slightly larger than 16 mm case, but ignition is terminated at t=50 s. At the termination phase, the density and the temperature are both decreased at the same time, and their variations are in phase.

For a large He ash confinement time ratio of $\tau_{\alpha}^{*}/\tau_{E} = 8$, fuel particle confinement time ratio of $\tau_{p}^{*}/\tau_{E}=3$, and $\gamma_{ISS}=1.55$ with the 14 mm pellet, ignition is also possible as shown in Fig. 7.

When the fuel particle confinement time ratio is even longer as $\tau_p * / \tau_E = 8$, ignition control can be done because the effective fuel particle confinement is shorter due to D-T fusion reactions.

4. Comparisons of the operating parameters with the stable operation

Operating parameters in the stable and unstable ignition regime are compared for the same parabolic density and temperature profiles and the same fusion power in Table 1. Note these values are



FIG. 7. Temporal evolution of the plasma parameters with pellet injection with 14 mm pellet size and $\tau_{\alpha}^{*/} \tau_{E} = 8$. (a)-(d) are the same as in Fig. 3 except for (c) Confinement factor and beta value.

obtained by continuous fueling. The plasma conduction loss P_L is reduced in the unstable high-density regime due to longer confinement time, and then the divertor heat flux is reduced almost by one half. To compensate the power balance, the bremsstrahlung loss P_B is increased. The beta value is larger in the high-density unstable regime because the plasma energy is larger for the same fusion power due to lower reactivity in the low temperature regime.

For the more peaked SDC profile, the beta value is reduced in comparison with the parabolic case. As the confinement time is also increased, the plasma conduction is further reduced, leading to smaller divertor heat flux of 5.4 MW/m^2 for the 10 cm width divertor plate.

However, SDC plasma tends to show the relatively lower confinement factor in LHD experiments. Therefore, the relations between the confinement enhancement factor γ_{ISS} , the helium ash confinement time ratio $\tau_{\alpha}^{*}/\tau_{E}$, and operating temperature T(0) in ignition are described in Table 2. If the confinement enhancement factor is small as 1.3, for example, the helium ash confinement time ratio should be lower than 4 to have a lower temperature around 7.22 keV for good pellet penetration. For a larger confinement factor of 1.6, the helium ash confinement time ratio should be lower than 5 to have a lower temperature around 7.14 keV for good pellet penetration. To lower the operating temperature for good pellet penetration, the helium ash confinement time ratio should be as small as possible.

TABLE 1.COMPARISON OF THE PLASMA PARAMETERS AT THE STABLE AND
UNSTABLE OPERATING POINT

		Steady state value			
		Stable Unstable operating poi		ating point	
		operating point	D 1 1		
		profile	profile	profile	
Major radius	R (m)	prome	14.0		
Effective minor radius	\overline{a} (m)	1 73			
Polarity/Field period	l/m	2/10			
Coil pitch parameter	γ	1 15			
Magnetic filed	B_{α} (T)		6.0	X141	
Maximum magnetic field	B _{ernar} (T)	13.3			
Coil magnetic energy	W _c (GJ)	120			
Blanket thickness	$\Delta B(m)$	12			
Rotational transform	t _{2/3}	0.92			
Maximum external heating power	Peyr (MW)	100			
Confinement factor over ISS95 scaling	Yuggor	192 16			
Confinement time	τ_{15595}	19	39	4.7	
Helium ash fraction	f	0.034	0.034	0.058	
Oxygen impurity fraction	f.	0.0075			
Effective ion charge	7 cc	1 48			
He ash confinement time ratio	$\tau * \tau_{-}$	3			
Fuel particle confinement time ratio	$\tau * / \tau_{-}$	3			
Fusion alpha heating efficiency	n	0.9			
Operation density	$n(0)(10^{20} \text{ m}^{-3})$	28 60		9.6	
Density limit factor over Sudo scaling	Yuune	1.5	4 5	5.5	
Density limit margin in the steady state	$\left[n(0)\right]$	1.27	1.36	1.59	
Ion temperature	$T_{i}(0)$ (keV)	153 85		6.4	
Ion to electron temperature ratio	T:/T	10			
Density profile	a	1.0 Box type			
Temperature profile	α	10 0		0.25	
Beta value	< <u>8>(%)</u>	30	36	2.5	
Plasma energy	W (MD)	547	634	448	
Fusion power	P _c (MW)	1900			
Neutron power	$P_{r}(MW)$	1520			
Alpha heating power	$P_n(MW)$	380x0 9			
Bremsstrahlung power	$P_{\alpha}(MW)$	57 181 248		248	
Synchrotron radiation power	$P_{\rm g}(\rm MW)$	34	0.97	0	
Plasma conduction loss	$P_{\rm r}$ (MW)	282	160	96	
Flectric power output (thermal efficiency)	P(MW)	627(33%)			
Neutron wall loading	Γ (MW/m ²)	15			
Heat flux to first wall	Γ (MW/m ²)	0.06 0.18 0.25			
Heat flux to divertor for 0.1m wet width	$\Gamma (MW/m^2)$	16	91	54	
Theat flux to divertor for 0. fill wet width	<u>div</u> (1V1 VV / 111)	1.10	2.1	1 2.4	

$\gamma_{\rm ISS}$	$\tau_{lpha}^{*}/\tau_{\rm E}$	n (0)	T(0)	Z_{eff}	f_{α}	P_{div}	<β>
1.2	3.0	6.77x10 ²⁰ m ⁻³	7.77 keV	1.48	3.28	12.1 MW/m^2	2.18
	3.5	6.43	8.12	1.49	3.83	12.6	2.16
1.3	3.0	8.19	6.89	1.49	3.79	9.29	2.33
	4.0	7.84	7.22	1.52	5.01	9.75	2.32
	5.0	7.45	7.62	1.54	6.22	10.3	2.32
	6.0	6.98	8.15	1.56	7.40	11.1	2.30
	6.5	6.67	8.51	1.57	7.99	11.5	<u>2,29</u>
1.4	3.0	8.89	6.59	1.50	4.40	7.63	2.41
	4.0	8.57	6.90	1.53	5.80	8.01	2.42
	5.0	8.23	7.24	1.56	7.17	8.44	2.43
	6.0	7.86	7.65	1.59	8.49	8.96	2.42
	7.0	7.44	8.14	1.61	9.78	9.61	2.42
	7.5	7.19	8.44	1.62	10.41	10.0	2.42
1.5	3.0	9.33	6.46	1.52	5.09	6.45	2.48
	4.0	9.01	6.78	1.55	6.69	6.79	2.48
	5.0	8.66	7.13	1.58	8.24	7.19	2.49
	6.0	8.30	7.53	1.61	9.73	7.67	2.50
	7.0	7.91	8.01	1.64	11.1	8.23	2.51
	7.5	7.70	8.27	1.65	11.8	8.56	2.52
1.6	3.0	9.62	6.41	1.53	5.84	5.55	2.52
	4.0	9.27	6.75	1.57	7.65	5.89	2.53
	5.0	8.91	7.14	1.60	9.39	6.28	2.55
	6.0	8.54	7.57	1.64	11.04	6.74	2.57
	7.0	8.15	8.07	1.67	12.59	7.29	2.59
	7.5	7.94	8.35	1.68	13.32	7.60	2.63

TABLE 2. THE CONFINEMENT ENHANCEMENT FACTOR, HELIUM ASH CONFINEMET TIME RATIO AND OPERATING TEMPERATURE IN IGNITION.

5. He ash measurements in normal discharges of LHD

The helium ash confinement time was measured in the normal discharge with the local island divertor (LID) operation with pumping effect for the magnetic axis of R=3.75m and B=2.64T. Even in the normal discharge this type of measurements have not been tried yet in LHD. Therefore, He gas puffing technique and charge exchange recombination spectroscopy (CXS) with NBI modulation are used in the range of $\bar{n} \sim 0.7 \times 10^{19} \text{m}^{-3}$ and $\bar{n} \sim 1.5 \times 10^{19} \text{m}^{-3}$.

In Fig.8 is shown the He-II line after subtracting the signal during no NBI phase



Fig 8. The decay waveform of the He-II line observed by CXS with 40 keV NBI modulation method for $\overline{n} \sim 0.7 \times 10^{19} \text{m}^{-3}$.

with $\overline{n} \sim 0.7 \times 10^{19} \text{m}^{-3}$ (#73556). The simple decay time analysis provides the He ion confinement time $\tau_{\alpha}^* \sim 450$ ms, and the energy confinement time is $\tau_{\text{E}} \sim 60$ ms during decay phase, yielding $\tau_{\alpha}^* / \tau_{\text{E}} \sim 7.5$. Here He gas source term was neglected during the decay phase, yielding the larger He ion confinement time. However, since we observe the appreciable He-II line signal by CXS without He gas puffing, the source term from the wall cannot be neglected.

In the higher density regime of $1.5 \times 10^{19} \text{m}^{-3}$, the frame just placed at the front of the detector was adjusted and its opening time was narrowed to reduce the total light. The similar decay signal of He-II line is shown in Fig. 9 after subtracting the signal during no NBI phase

(#81965). The simple decay time analysis provides the He ion confinement time $\tau_{\alpha}^* \sim 456$ ms,

and the energy confinement time is $\tau_E \sim 50$ ms during decay phase, yielding $\tau_{\alpha}^{*}/\tau_E \sim 9$. However, the wall recycling effect would reduce it more.

The plum effect (the He⁺ ions created by NBI may emit the same He-II line by the electron impact excitation along the magnetic field line) and wall recycling effect should be taken into account in the future analysis.

6. Comparison between FFHR parameters and LHD experimental data, and summary

In Fig. 10 the experimentally achieved values and required plasma parameters for the high-density operation are compared. The temperature, density, beta, confinement factor etc are close to the presently but not simultaneously achieved values. The divertor heat flux is also within the present technology range. Although allowable maximum helium ash confinement time ratio of $\tau_{\alpha}^{*}/\tau_{E}$ ~8.0 in this proposed high-density operation is larger than the experimental value (Fig. 10), further reduction is desired for lower temperature operation for easing pellet injection.

Thus we reach conclusion that the



Fig 9. The decay waveform at R=4.05m when the plume effect is neglected for $n=1.5 \times 10^{19} \text{m}^{-3}$.



Fig. 10. Comparison of experimentally achieved but independently observed values in LHD (open rectangular) and parameters in the high-density helical reactor (Solid circle corresponds to Fig. 3, and solid square to the case of $\tau_{\alpha}^{*}/\tau_{E}$ ~8.0).

LHD type helical reactor with the low temperature and high-density operation is quite promising for a D-T fusion reactor.

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