Numerical Analysis of Quantum-Mechanical Non-uniform $E \times B$ Drift: Non-uniform electric field

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Abstract. We have numerically solved the two-dimensional time-dependent Schrödinger equation for a charged particle in the presence of a non-uniform electric field $E = E(1 - y/L_E) e_y$ as well as a non-uniform magnetic field $B = B(1 - y/L_B) e_z$. It is shown that such a non-uniformity of the electric field does not affect the time rate of the variance, or uncertainty, changes in position and momentum, while that of the magnetic field does.

Keywords: Schrödinger equation, uncertainty, non-uniform magnetic field, non-uniform electric field, quantum mechanical effect, expansion rate, GPU parallel computing

1. Introduction

The charged particles drift in the presence of a magnetic field $B$, the drifts include $\nabla B$ drift, curvature drift and $E \times B$ drift if there exist an electric field $E$. The two-dimensional time-dependent Schrödinger equation have been already solved for a charged particle in the presence of a non-uniform magnetic field and a uniform electric field, in which it was shown that the variance, or the uncertainty, in position $\sigma^2_r(t)$ grows with time [1–5]. For the typical fusion plasma with a temperature $T \sim 10$ keV and a number density of $n \sim 10^{20}$ m$^{-3}$, the standard deviation $\sigma_r(t)$ would reach the interparticle separation $n^{-1/3}$ in a time interval of the order of $10^{-4}$ sec. After this time the wavefunctions of neighboring particles would overlap, as a result the conventional classical analysis may lose its validity [1]. In Ref. [1] mentioned above, the uniform electric field have been assumed. In this paper, quantum mechanical effects of a non-uniform electric field and a non-uniform magnetic field will be studied. In section 2, methods of numerical analysis of time-dependent Schrödinger equation is briefly described. In section 3, time evolution of the variances and their dependence on physical parameters, e.g. $m, q, v_0, B, L_B, E,$ and $L_E$ are shown. Section 4 summarizes the study.

2. Schrödinger equation

The unsteady Schrödinger equation for wavefunction $\psi(r, t)$, at a position $r$ and a time $t$, is given by
\[ i\hbar \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} = \left[ \frac{1}{2m} \left( -i\hbar \nabla - qA \right)^2 + qV \right] \psi, \]  

where \( V = V(r) \) and \( A = A(r) \) stand for the scalar and vector potentials, \( m \) and \( q \) the mass and electric charge of the particle, and \( i = \sqrt{-1} \) the imaginary unit, \( \hbar \) the reduced Planck constant.

2.1. Numerical analysis

In the Cartesian coordinate system \((x, y, z)\), we assume the magnetic field \( B \parallel e_z \) and the electric field \( E \perp e_z \), where \( e_z \) is the \( z \)-direction unit vector. In this case, the wavefunction \( \psi(x, y, z, t) \) is decomposed into \( \psi(x, y, t) \) which corresponds to cyclotron motion in \( x-y \) plane and \( \psi(z, t) \) which corresponds to free particle motion in \( z \)-direction.

We will solve Eq. (1) with an appropriate initial condition in \( x-y \) plane, using the finite difference method (FDM) in space with the Crank-Nicolson scheme [1–5].

For the Crank-Nicolson scheme with the central difference method in space, partial differential equation Eq. (1) is reduced to the following matrix equation,

\[ \left( I - \frac{\Delta t}{2i\hbar}H \right) \{ \psi^{n+1} \} = \left( I + \frac{\Delta t}{2i\hbar}H \right) \{ \psi^n \}. \]  

Here, \( \{ \psi^n \} \) stands for the discretized wavefunction, the superscript \( n \) represents the time-label, \( I \) and \( H \) are the unit matrix and the numerical Hamiltonian matrix [1–5]. Assuming the Coulomb gauge \( \nabla \cdot A = 0 \), the numerical Hamiltonian matrix \( H \equiv \{ H_{i,j} \} \) is written as follows,

\[ H_{i,j} = \frac{1}{2m} \left[ \nabla_{i,j}^2 + 2i\hbar q A_{i,j} \cdot \nabla_{i,j} + (q A_{i,j})^2 \right] + qV_{i,j}, \]  

where \( A_{i,j} \) and \( \nabla_{i,j} \) represent the discretized operators, as

\[ \nabla_{i,j}^2 \psi = \frac{\psi_{i-1,j} - 2\psi_{i,j} + \psi_{i+1,j}}{\Delta x^2} + \frac{\psi_{i,j-1} - 2\psi_{i,j} + \psi_{i,j+1}}{\Delta y^2}, \]  

and the subscripts \( i \) and \( j \) represent \( x \)- and \( y \)- node numbers. Equations (2) and (3) are quadratic in accuracy over both the time step \( \Delta t \) and the grid size \( \Delta x \) and \( \Delta y \).

The time integrator \( U \) is derived from Eq. (2) as,

\[ U \equiv \left( I - \frac{\Delta t}{2i\hbar}H \right)^{-1} \left( I + \frac{\Delta t}{2i\hbar}H \right). \]  

It should be noted that the time integrator is not only unconditionally stable but also norm-conserving for discretized wavefunction \( \{ \psi \} \). The latter leads to the strict particle conservation, irrespective of \( \Delta t, \Delta x \) and \( \Delta y \), since the matrix \( H \) is Hermitian, so that the matrix \( U \) is unitary; the Euclidean norm \( \| \{ \psi \} \|_2 = \text{const} \) with time [1].

We will also adopt the successive over relaxation (SOR) scheme for time integration in Eq. (2).

\[ \{ \psi^{n+1} \}^{(k+1)} = \{ \psi^{n+1} \}^{(k)} + \omega_{\text{SOR}} \{ R \}^{(k)}, \]  

where
\[ R = \frac{1}{\alpha} \left[ \phi^n - \left( 1 - \frac{\Delta t}{2i\hbar} \hat{H} \right) \phi^{n+1} \right], \]  
\( \phi^n = \left( 1 + \frac{\Delta t}{2i\hbar} \hat{H} \right) \psi^n, \]

\( R \) is the residual in Eq. (2), \( \alpha \) stands for the diagonal element in LHS of Eq. (2), superscript \( (k) \) represents the number of iterations, \( \omega_{\text{SOR}} \) is the relaxation factor and \( \omega_{\text{SOR}} = 1.01 \) is adopted in this study. For the convergence criterion, we have used the following,

\[ \frac{1}{N_x N_y} \sum_{i,j=1}^{N_x, N_y} |R_{i,j}|^2 \leq \epsilon_{\text{SOR}}, \]

where \( N_x \) and \( N_y \) represent the number of nodes in \( x \)- and \( y \)-direction, and \( \epsilon_{\text{SOR}} = 5 \times 10^{-31} \) in this study.

Since Eq. (6) can be executed in parallel, we have used a graphics processing unit (GPU) [9] for this purpose.

3. Numerical results

In the numerical results to be presented in the following, physical parameters are normalized as; mass of the particle \( m = m_p = 1.6722 \times 10^{-27} \text{ kg} \), charge \( q = e = 1.602 \times 10^{-19} \text{ C} \), velocity \( v = 10 \text{ ms}^{-1} \) and magnetic field \( B = 10 \text{ T} \) [1]. Thus, normalization constants of length \( \rho \), time \( t \) and electric field \( E \) are \( \rho = m_p v / e B = 1.0438 \times 10^{-8} \text{ m} \), \( t = m_p / e B = 1.0438 \times 10^{-9} \text{ s} \) and \( E = v B = 100 \text{ V m}^{-1} \). The Schrödinger equation is solved in the presence of a scalar potential of \( qV = -qE y (1 - y/2L_E) \) and a vector potential of \( qA = qB y (1 - y/2L_B) e_y \), where \( L_E \) and \( L_B \) stand for a gradient scale length of an electric field and magnetic field.

When the corresponding classical particle has a canonical momentum \( p_0 = m v_0 + q A (r_0) \), where \( v_0 \) is the initial velocity at a position \( r = r_0 \), initially at a time \( t = 0 \), the initial condition for the wavefunction \( \psi(r, 0) \) can be given [6, 7] by

\[ \psi(r, 0) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi} \sigma_B} \exp \left[ -\frac{(r - r_0)^2}{2\sigma_B^2} + ik_0 \cdot r \right], \]

where \( k_0 = p_0 / \hbar \) is the initial wavenumber vector, and \( \sigma_B \equiv \sqrt{\hbar / q B} \) is known as the magnetic length in quantum mechanics [8].

3.1. Numerical errors

There are three invariants of motion, the energy \( E = \langle \hat{H} \rangle \), the canonical momentum in \( x \)-direction \( P_x = \langle -i\hbar \partial / \partial x \rangle = (m \hat{v}_x - q \hat{A}_x) \), since the potentials \( V \) and \( A \) do not depend on \( x \), as well as particle conservation \( \int_E |\psi|^2 dS = 1 \). Here, \( \langle f \rangle \) stands for the expectation value of an operator \( f \), i.e. \( \langle f \rangle = \int_E \psi^* f \psi dS \). The absolute numerical errors in these invariants are quite small as shown Fig. 1.
3.2. Time evolution of variances

The time dependent variances in position $\sigma_r^2(t)$ and mechanical momentum $\sigma_{mv}^2(t)$ oscillate with each gyration period, such as $2\pi/\omega_c$ and $\pi/\omega_c$, where $\omega_c$ is the cyclotron frequency, as shown Fig. 2. In both uniform and non-uniform conditions, the variances slightly grow with time. Since the exact variances should not grow with time in the presence of a uniform electromagnetic field, these time evolution $\sigma_{\text{non-uniform}}^2(t)$ are due purely to numerical errors. On the other hand, the time evolution $\sigma_{\text{uniform}}^2(t)$ in the presence of the non-uniform electromagnetic field consists of physical increment and about the same numerical errors as the case of the uniform field. Thus, let us define the increment of variances, $\Delta \sigma^2(t)$, between $\sigma_{\text{non-uniform}}^2(t)$ and $\sigma_{\text{uniform}}^2(t)$, as

$$\Delta \sigma^2(t) = \sigma_{\text{non-uniform}}^2(t) - \sigma_{\text{uniform}}^2(t).$$

(11)

The increment $\Delta \sigma^2(t)$ shows the physical time evolution of variances, as shown in Fig. 3. Also depicted in the figure is a fitting line, which represents the time averaged evolution of variance. Let us also define the expansion rate in position $d\sigma_r^2/dt$ and mechanical momentum $d\sigma_{mv}^2/dt$, using the fitting lines’ gradient.

3.3. Rate of changes in variances

For various combinations of physical parameters, such as $m$, $q$, $v_0$, $E$, $B$, $L_B$ and $L_E$, similar analyses to that in the preceding section give us the relationship between the expansion rate of variances in position $d\sigma_r^2(t)/dt$ as a function of $\hbar v_0/qBL_B$, as shown in the left panel of Fig. 4, and in mechanical momentum $d\sigma_{mv}^2(t)/dt$ as a function of $\hbar qBv_0/L_B$ in the right panel of Fig. 4. Also depicted are the fitting lines. It is noted that the variances clearly on the respective fitting lines of

$$\frac{d\sigma_r^2}{dt} = (2.00 \pm 0.03) \frac{\hbar v_0}{qB L_B},$$

(12)

$$\frac{d\sigma_{mv}^2}{dt} = (1.030 \pm 0.005) \hbar qB v_0 L_B,$$

(13)
both of which do not depend on the particle mass $m$, the magnitude of electric field $E$ nor the gradient scale length of electric field $L_E$. Therefore, it is shown that the non-uniform electric field $E = E(1 - y/L_E) e_y$ does not affect the expansion rates while the non-uniform magnetic field $B = B(1 - y/L_B) e_z$ does.

Let us apply the expansion rate to the typical fusion plasma with a temperature $T = 10$ keV, number density $n = 10^{20}$ m$^{-3}$, a magnetic field $B = 5$ T and a gradient scale length of magnetic field $L_B = 3$ m, which is the major axis of a torus. When we take a proton for the charged particle and the thermal velocity $v_{th} \sim 1.352 \times 10^6$ m/s for $v_0$ in Eq. (13), the standard deviation $\sigma_r^2(t)$ of the proton reaches the interparticle separation $n^{-1/3}$ in a time interval 0.38 msec. In contrast, the ion-ion collision time is about 20 msec [10]. Thus, overlapping of wavefunctions of neighboring protons would occur before the conventional collision time.
4. Summary

We have solved the two-dimensional time-dependent Schödinger equation for a charged particle in the presence of a non-uniform electric field \( \mathbf{E} = E (1 - y/L_E) \mathbf{e}_y \) and magnetic field \( \mathbf{B} = B (1 - y/L_B) \mathbf{e}_z \). It is shown that the particle mass and the electric field do not affect the expansion rate as long as the electric field has the uniform gradient.

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References