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François Konschelle, Alexandre Buzdin. Magnetic moment manipulation by a Josephson current. 2008. hal-00333601v1

HAL Id: hal-00333601

<https://hal.science/hal-00333601v1>

Preprint submitted on 23 Oct 2008 (v1), last revised 8 Jan 2009 (v3)

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Magnetic moment manipulation by a Josephson current

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(Dated: October 23, 2008)

We consider a Josephson junction with the weak-link forming by a non-centrosymmetric ferromagnet. In such a junction, the superconducting current acts as a direct driving force on the magnetic moment. We show that a.c. Josephson effect generates magnetic precession providing then a feedback to the current. Magnetic dynamics results in several anomalies of current-phase relations (second harmonic, dissipative current) which are strongly enhanced near the ferromagnetic resonance frequency.

Many interesting phenomena have been observed recently in the field of spintronic: the spin-dependent electric current and inversely the current-dependent magnetization orientation (see for example [1, 2]). Moreover, it is well known that spin-orbit interaction may be of primary importance for spintronic, namely for systems using two-dimensional electron gas [3]. In the superconductor/ferromagnet/superconductor (S/F/S) Josephson junctions, the spin-orbit interaction in a ferromagnet without inversion symmetry provides a mechanism of a direct (linear) coupling between magnetic moment and superconducting current [4]. Similar anomalous properties have been predicted for Josephson junctions with spin-polarized quantum point contact in a two dimensional electron gas [5]. S/F/S junctions are known to reveal a transition to π -phase, where the superconducting phase difference φ in the ground state is equal to π [6]. However, the current-phase relation (CPR) in such a π -junction has a usual sinusoidal form $I = I_c \sin \varphi$, where the critical current I_c depends on a damped oscillatory manner on the modulus of the ferromagnet exchange field. In a non-centrosymmetric ferromagnetic junction, called hereafter φ_0 -junction, the time reversal symmetry is broken and the CPR becomes $I = I_c \sin(\varphi - \varphi_0)$, where the phase shift φ_0 is proportional to the magnetic moment perpendicular to the gradient of the asymmetric spin-orbit potential [4]. Therefore, manipulation of the internal magnetic moment can be realized via the superconducting phase difference (*i.e.* by Josephson current).

In the present work we study theoretically the spin dynamics associated with such φ_0 -junctions. Though there are a lot of experimental progress in studying the static properties of S/F/S junctions, a little is known about the spin-dynamics in S/F systems. Note here the pioneering work [7] where a sharpening of the ferromagnetic resonance was observed below the superconducting transition in Nb/Ni₈₀Fe₂₀ system [7]. Theoretically, dynamically induced triplet proximity effect in S/F/S junctions was studied in [8, 9], while the junctions with composite regions (including several F regions with different magnetization) were discussed in [10, 11]. Here we consider a simple S/F/S φ_0 -junction at low frequency regime ($\hbar\omega_J \ll T_c$ ($\omega_J = 2eV/\hbar$ being the Josephson angular frequency [12]), which permit us to use quasi-

static approach treating the superconducting subsystem in contrast with the case analyzed in [8, 9]. We demonstrate that a d.c. superconducting current may produce a strong orientation effect on the F layer magnetic moment. More interestingly, a.c. Josephson effect, *i.e.* applying a d.c. voltage V to the φ_0 -junction would produce current oscillations and consequently magnetic precession. This precession may be monitored by appearance of higher harmonics in CPR as well as a d.c. component of current. In particular regimes, a total reversal of the magnetization could be observed. In the case of strong coupling between magnetic and superconducting subsystems, complicated non-linear dynamic regimes emerge.

To demonstrate the unusual properties of the φ_0 -junction, we consider the case of an easy-axis magnetic anisotropy of the F material (see Fig.1). Both the easy axis and gradient of the asymmetric spin-orbit potential \mathbf{n} are along z -axis. Note that suitable candidates for F interlayer may be MnSi or FeGe. In these systems, lack of inversion center comes from a crystalline structure, but the origin of broken-inversion symmetry may also be extrinsic, like in a situation near the surface of a thin F film. In the following, we completely disregard the magnetic induction. Indeed the magnetic induction in (xy) plane is negligible for the thin F layer considered in this paper, whereas the demagnetization factor cancels the internal induction along z -axis ($N = 1$). The coupling between F and S subsystems due to the orbital effect has been studied in [13] and it appears to be very weak, and quadratic over magnetic moment \mathbf{M} for the case when the flux of \mathbf{M} through the F layer is small in comparison with flux quantum $\Phi_0 = h/2e$.

The superconducting part of the energy of a φ_0 -junction is

$$E_s(\varphi, \varphi_0) = E_J [1 - \cos(\varphi - \varphi_0)], \quad (1)$$

where $E_J = \Phi_0 I_c / 2\pi$ is the Josephson energy, I_c is the critical current and φ_0 is proportional to M_y component of the magnetic moment (see Fig.1). Therefore, when magnetic moment is oriented along the z -axis, we have the usual Josephson junction with $\varphi_0 = 0$. Assuming the ballistic limit we may estimate the characteristic Josephson energy as [6] $\Phi_0 I_c / S \sim T_c k_F^2 \sin x / x$ with $x = 4hL/\hbar v_F$, where S , L and h are the section, the

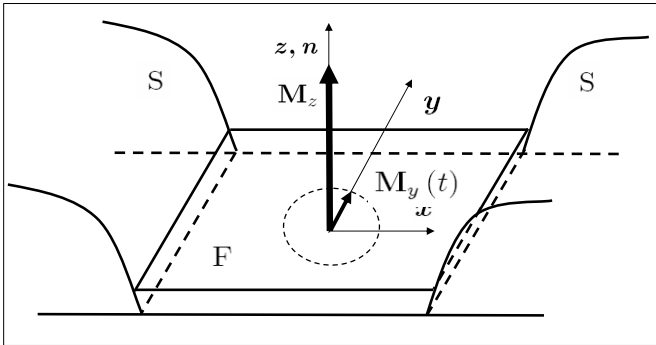


FIG. 1: Geometry of the considered φ_0 -junction. The ferromagnetic easy-axis is directed along z -axis, which is also the direction of the gradient of the spin-orbit potential. The magnetization component \mathbf{M}_y is coupled with Josephson current through the phase shift term $\varphi_0 \propto \mathbf{n} \cdot (\mathbf{M} \wedge \nabla \Psi)$, where \mathbf{n} is the gradient of the asymmetric crystalline potential and Ψ the superconducting parameter ($\nabla \Psi$ is along x -axis in the system considered here).

length and the exchange field of the F layer, respectively. The phase shift is

$$\varphi_0 = x \frac{v_{\text{so}}}{v_F} \frac{M_y}{M_0} \quad (2)$$

where the parameter v_{so}/v_F characterizes the relative strength of the spin-orbit interaction [4]. Further on we assume that $v_{\text{so}}/v_F \sim 0.1$. If the temperature is well below the Curie temperature, $M_0 = \|\mathbf{M}\|$ can be considered as a constant equal to the saturation magnetization of the F layer. The magnetic energy contribution is reduced to the anisotropy energy

$$E_M = -\frac{K\mathcal{V}}{2} \left(\frac{M_z}{M_0} \right)^2, \quad (3)$$

where K is an anisotropy constant and \mathcal{V} is the volume of the F layer.

Naturally, we may expect that the most interesting situation corresponds to the case when magnetic anisotropy energy does not exceed too much the Josephson energy. From the measurements [14] on permalloy with very weak anisotropy, we may estimate $K \sim 4.10^{-5} \text{ K} \cdot \text{\AA}^{-3}$. On the other hand, typical value of L in S/F/S junction is $L \sim 10 \text{ nm}$ and $\sin x/x \sim 1$. Then, the ratio of the Josephson over magnetic energy would be $E_J/E_M \sim 100$ for $T_c \sim 10 \text{ K}$. Naturally, in the more realistic case of stronger anisotropy this ratio would be smaller but it is plausible to expect a great variety of regimes from $E_J/E_M \ll 1$ to $E_J/E_M \gg 1$.

Let us now consider the case when a constant current $I < I_c$ is applied to the φ_0 -junction. The total energy is (see, e.g. [12]):

$$E_{\text{tot}} = -\frac{\Phi_0}{2\pi} \varphi I + E_s(\varphi, \varphi_0) + E_M(\varphi_0), \quad (4)$$

and the superconducting phase shift difference φ and the rotation of magnetic moment $M_y = M_0 \sin \theta$ are determined from the energy minimum conditions $\partial_{\varphi} E_{\text{tot}} = \partial_{\varphi_0} E_{\text{tot}} = 0$. It results in

$$\sin \theta = \frac{I}{I_c} \Gamma \quad \text{with} \quad \Gamma = \frac{E_J}{K\mathcal{V}} x \frac{v_{\text{so}}}{v_F}, \quad (5)$$

which signifies that a superconducting current provokes the rotation of the magnetic moment M_y in (yz) plane and for weak rotation, $\theta(I)$ dependence is linear. In principle, the parameter Γ can be larger than one. In that case, when the condition $I/I_c \geq 1/\Gamma$ is fulfilled, the magnetic moment will be oriented along y -axis. Therefore, applying a d.c. superconducting current switches the direction of the magnetization, whereas applying an a.c. current on a φ_0 -junction could generate the precession of the magnetic moment.

We briefly comment the situation when the direction of the gradient of the spin-orbit potential is perpendicular (along y) to the easy axis z . To consider this case we need simply to take $\varphi_0 = x (v_{\text{so}}/v_F) \cos \theta$. The energy (4) $E_{\text{tot}}(\theta)$ has two minima $\theta = (0, \pi)$, while applying the current removes the degeneracy between them. However, the energy barrier exists for the switch from one minimum into another. This barrier may disappear if $\Gamma > 1$ and the current is large enough $I > I_c/\Gamma$. In this regime the superconducting current would provoke the switches of the magnetization between one stable configuration $\theta = 0$ and another $\theta = \pi$. This corresponds to the transitions of the junction between $+\varphi_0$ and $-\varphi_0$ states. The read-out of the state of the φ_0 -junction may be easily performed if it is a part of some SQUID-like circuit (the φ_0 -junction induces a shift of the diffraction pattern by φ_0).

In fact, the voltage-biased Josephson junction, and thus a.c. Josephson effect provides an ideal tool to study magnetic dynamics in φ_0 -junction. In such a case, the superconducting phase varies with time like $\varphi(t) = \omega_J t$ [15]. If $\hbar\omega_J \ll T_c$, one can use for the energy of the junction the static value (4) considering $\varphi(t)$ as an external potential. The magnetization dynamics is described by the Landau-Lifshitz-Gilbert equation (LLG) [16]

$$\frac{d\mathbf{M}}{dt} = \gamma \mathbf{M} \wedge \mathbf{H}_{\text{eff}} + \frac{\alpha}{M_0} \left(\mathbf{M} \wedge \frac{d\mathbf{M}}{dt} \right), \quad (6)$$

where $\mathbf{H}_{\text{eff}} = -\delta F/\mathcal{V} \delta \mathbf{M}$ is the effective magnetic field applied to the compound, γ the gyromagnetic ratio, and α a phenomenological damping constant.

The corresponding free energy $F = E_s + E_M$ yields

$$\mathbf{H}_{\text{eff}} = \frac{K}{M_0} \left[\Gamma \sin \left(\omega_J t - r \frac{M_y}{M_0} \right) \hat{\mathbf{y}} + \frac{M_z}{M_0} \hat{\mathbf{z}} \right], \quad (7)$$

where $r = xv_{\text{so}}/v_F$.

Introducing $m_i = M_i/M_0$, $\tau = \omega_F t$ ($\omega_F = \gamma K/M_0^2$ is the frequency of the ferromagnetic resonance) in LLG

equation (6) leads to

$$\begin{cases} \dot{m}_x = m_z(\tau) m_y(\tau) - \Gamma m_z(\tau) \sin(\omega\tau - r m_y) \\ \dot{m}_y = -m_z(\tau) m_x(\tau) \\ \dot{m}_z = \Gamma m_x(\tau) \sin(\omega\tau - r m_y), \end{cases} \quad (8)$$

where $m_i = M_i/M_0$, $\tau = \omega_F t$, $\omega_F = \gamma K/M_0^2$ is the frequency of the ferromagnetic resonance and $\omega = \omega_J/\omega_F$. The generalization of Eq.(8) for $\alpha \neq 0$ is straightforward.

One consider first the "weak coupling" regime $\Gamma \ll 1$ when the Josephson energy E_J is small in comparison with magnetic energy E_M . In this case, the magnetic moment performs precession around z -axis. If the other components verify $(m_x, m_y) \ll 1$, then the equations (8) may be linearized, and the corresponding solutions are

$$m_x(t) = \frac{\Gamma \omega \cos \omega_J t}{1 - \omega^2} \text{ and } m_y(t) = -\frac{\Gamma \sin \omega_J t}{1 - \omega^2}. \quad (9)$$

Near the resonance $\omega_J \approx \omega_F$, the conditions of linearization are violated and it is necessary to take into account the damping. The precessing magnetic moment influences the current through the φ_0 -junction like

$$\frac{I}{I_c} = \sin \omega_J t + \frac{\Gamma r}{2} \frac{1}{\omega^2 - 1} \sin 2\omega_J t + \dots, \quad (10)$$

i.e., in addition to the first harmonic oscillations, the current reveals higher harmonics contributions. The amplitude of the harmonics increases near the resonance and changes its sign when ω_J is swept over ω_F . Thus, monitoring the second harmonic oscillations of the current would reveal the dynamics of the magnetic system.

The damping plays an important role in the dynamics of the considered system. It results in a d.c. contribution to the Josephson current. Indeed, the corresponding expression for $m_y(t)$ in the presence of damping becomes

$$m_y(t) = \frac{\omega_+ - \omega_-}{r} \sin \omega_J t + \frac{\alpha_- - \alpha_+}{r} \cos \omega_J t, \quad (11)$$

where

$$\omega_{\pm} = \frac{\Gamma r}{2} \frac{\omega \pm 1}{\Omega_{\pm}} \text{ and } \alpha_{\pm} = \frac{\Gamma r}{2} \frac{\alpha}{\Omega_{\pm}}, \quad (12)$$

with $\Omega_{\pm} = (\omega \pm 1)^2 + \alpha^2$. It thus exhibits a damped resonance as the Josephson frequency is tuned to the ferromagnetic one $\omega \rightarrow 1$. Moreover, the damping leads to the appearance of out of phase oscillations of $m_y(t)$ (term proportional to $\cos \omega_J t$ in Eq.(11)). In the result the current

$$\begin{aligned} I(t) \approx I_c \sin \omega_J t + I_c \frac{\omega_+ - \omega_-}{2} \sin 2\omega_J t + \\ + I_c \frac{\alpha_- - \alpha_+}{2} \cos 2\omega_J t + I_0(\alpha) \end{aligned} \quad (13)$$

acquires a d.c. component

$$I_0(\alpha) = \frac{\alpha \Gamma r}{4} \left(\frac{1}{\Omega_-} - \frac{1}{\Omega_+} \right). \quad (14)$$

This d.c. current in the presence of constant voltage V applied on the junction means dissipative regime and this current can be easily detected on experiment. In some aspect, the peak of d.c. current near the resonance reminds the Shapiro steps effect in Josephson junctions under external r.f. fields. Note that the presence of second harmonic in $I(t)$ Eq.(13) should also leads to half-integer Shapiro steps in φ_0 -junctions [17].

The limit of the "strong coupling" $\Gamma \gg 1$ (but $r \ll 1$) can also be treated analytically. In this case, $m_y \approx 0$ and solutions of Eq.(8) yields

$$\begin{cases} m_x(t) = \sin \left[\frac{\Gamma}{\omega} (1 - \cos \omega_J t) \right], \\ m_z(t) = \cos \left[\frac{\Gamma}{\omega} (1 - \cos \omega_J t) \right], \end{cases} \quad (15)$$

which are the equations of the magnetization reversal, a complete reversal being induced by $\Gamma/\omega > \pi/2$. Strictly speaking, these solutions are not exact oscillatory functions in the sense that $m_z(t)$ turn around the sphere center counterclockwise before reversing its rotation, and return to the position $m_z(t=0) = 1$ clockwise, like a pendulum in a spherical potential (see Fig.2.c).

Finally, we have performed numerical studies of the non-linear LLG Eq.(6) for some choices of the parameters when the analytical approaches fail. To check the consistency of our numerical and analytical approaches, we present in Fig.2.a) the corresponding $m_z(t)$ dependences for low-damping regimes. They clearly demonstrate the possibility of the magnetization reversal. In Figs.2b-d), some trajectories of the magnetization vectors are presented for general coupling regimes. These results demonstrate that the magnetic dynamics of S/F/S φ_0 -junction may be pretty complicated and strongly non-harmonic.

A very rich physics emerges if the φ_0 -junction is exposed to the microwave radiation at angular frequency ω_1 . First, in addition to the Shapiro steps at $\omega_J = n\omega_1$, it will appear half-integer-steps. Secondly, the microwave magnetic field may also generate the additional magnetic precession with ω_1 frequency. Depending on the parameters of φ_0 -junction and the amplitude of the microwave radiation the main precession mechanism may be related either with Josephson current or microwave. In the last case the magnetic spin-orbit coupling may substantially contribute to the amplitude of the Shapiro steps. Therefore, we could expect a dramatic increase of this amplitude at frequencies near the ferromagnetic resonance. When the influence of the microwave and Josephson current on the precession is comparable, a very complicated regime may be observed.

To summarize, we have demonstrated that S/F/S φ_0 -junctions provide the possibility to generate magnetic moment precession via Josephson current. In the regime of strong coupling between magnetization and current,

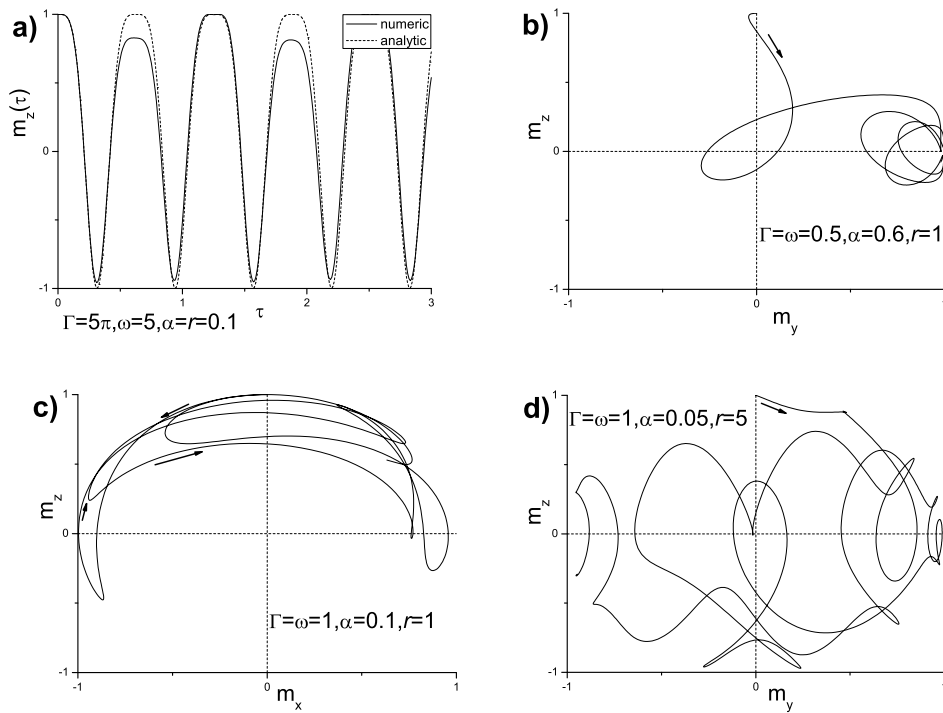


FIG. 2: Results of numerical analysis of the magnetic moment dynamics of the φ_0 -junction. a) Reversal of m_z from analytical expression Eq.(15) (dashed curve) and numerical one (normal curve). The other curves are related to the \mathbf{M} trajectory: b) in strong damping case c) and d) in the strong coupling regime revealing incomplete and complete magnetic moment reversal, respectively.

magnetic reversal may also occurs. These effects have been studied analytically and numerically. We believe that the discussed properties of the φ_0 -junctions could open interesting perspectives for its applications in spintronic.

The authors are grateful to J. Cayssol, M. Houzet and D. Gusakova for useful discussions and comments. This work was supported by the French ANR Grant N° ANR-07-NANO-011: ELEC-EPR.

* Also at *Institut Universitaire de France*.

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