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**Development of a Plasma Gun for application in Magnetized
Target Fusion**

A Thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
Chemistry

Massey University, Albany,
New Zealand

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2005

Abstract

A recently proposed route to magnetized target fusion (MTF) has been developed [4] which utilizes an array of high velocity pulsed plasma accelerators, fired in unison at a target plasma. The plasma accelerators are required to be capable of reproducible results of 0.2mg of hydrogen plasma at velocities in excess of 200km/s and be possible of operating at 10Hz. No previously developed pulse plasma accelerator is capable of these results.

The purpose of this thesis was to develop a plasma accelerator for application to the proposed fusion scheme. The previously unexplored possibility of using a piezoelectric valve in these devices was investigated. The piezoelectric valve that was developed is capable of generating reproducible, short, well defined hydrogen pulses with longitudinal temperatures below 2K. Presently the valve can deliver a maximum output of 0.022mg of hydrogen gas.

A unique coaxial plasma accelerator, the Lica was developed that has three main features that set it apart: 1) it uses a piezoelectric valve to deliver short well defined hydrogen pulses into the accelerator, 2) the gas is linearly injected into the device and 3) it uses a novel preionization method. Currently the Lica is unable to offer the performance required for the proposed fusion scheme, the bulk of the plasma generated in this device appears to be travelling the region of 40-50km/s at a temperature of 3000K to 5000K. There are a few anomalies in the operation of this device: 1) it appears to accelerate a series of plasma sheaths in the regions of 40km/s, 50km/s and 60-80km/s, 2) the final plasma velocity appears to be independent of the acceleration distance and in some instances high velocity plasma in the region of 200km/s was observed.

A numerical finite element model (FEM) electromagnetic model called MATAC was developed to try and simulate the operation of the Lica, because it was shown that simple analytical models are inadequate. The preliminary modelling efforts predicted the final velocity of the bulk of the plasma to be 82.6km/s. A spin off from the development of the numerical model was the extension of the upwinding scheme of [157] to quadratic and cubic FEM elements.

Acknowledgements

Throughout this thesis my mentor Dr John Harrison has given me constant guidance, support and intellectual freedom. I am indebted to his enthusiastic efforts in the completion of this research, in particular the construction of the plasma accelerator and the pulsed valve. Special thanks go to Dr Marie-Anne Thelen who worked on the program written in LABVIEW that was used to collect the data from both the plasma accelerator and the pulsed valve. Dr Lutz Gross deserves a special mention for his initial help in the numerical modelling aspects of this research.

I would also like to thank Dr Geoff Dingley for developing some of the equipment used in the plasma accelerator, in particular the voltage driver for the preionizer unit, and Technician Joe Wang for building the devices. In addition I would like to acknowledge the advice and help of Dr Scott Whineray.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Albany Principal Professor Ian Watson, Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Robert Anderson and Professor Sir Neil Waters for their support and fund raising for this research.

I am indebted to both the Foundation for Research Science and Technology for awarding me with a: Bright Futures Top Achiever Doctoral Scholarship (TAD 680) and the IFS Graduate Research Fund, without whose support this thesis would not have been possible.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the makers of the MATLAB, SOLIDWORKS and LABVIEW programs which were used extensively in this thesis.

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