

MINERAL INSULATED COMBINED FLUX LOOP AND B-DOT WIRE

FIELD

[0001] The subject matter described herein relates generally to plasma diagnostics and, more particularly, to a magnetic diagnostic probe that facilitates measurement of the changing magnetic fields generated by a plasma and magnet coils.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Inductive magnetic diagnostics are used to measure the changing magnetic fields generated by plasmas and magnet coils. Many parameters of plasma, such as, e.g., a field-reversed configuration (FRC) plasma, can be inferred from magnetic measurements, including: size, shape, location, global instability modes, and frequency-high fluctuations. Quality measurements of these various parameters require specialized arrays of individual magnetic sensors placed throughout the inner wall of the vacuum or confinement vessel. Each individual magnetic sensor is typically a loop of wire connected to an analog integrator and data acquisition electronics. This type of sensor is usually called a magnetic probe or B-dot if it is small in cross-sectional area or a flux loop if it is large. While these magnetic sensors are conceptually very simple, the design of practical magnetic diagnostic systems is complicated by an assortment of factors, including: detection bandwidth, noise pickup, vacuum compatibility, radiation environment compatibility, general durability, align-ability, and signal drift. Balancing the trade-offs inherent in the interplay between all these factors is the key to designing a successful magnetic diagnostic system.

[0003] Magnetic probes and flux loops are venerable types of plasma diagnostic that are both robust and effective. These devices employ Faraday's law of induction to measure magnetic field and flux. Changes in the magnetic flux $\Phi = \int \vec{B} \cdot \vec{n} da$ passing through coils of wire produces a voltage V_c that is proportional to the time derivative of the magnetic field component B parallel to the axis of coil,

$$V_c = -\frac{d\Phi}{dt} = -n_c a_c \frac{dB}{dt} \quad (1)$$

where n_c is the number of turns, and a_c is the area of each turn. Measurements of V_c can therefore be integrated, either electronically or through computation, to yield values for either Φ or B

depending on the configuration of the coil. Single-turn coils that encompass large areas are used to measure Φ and are referred to as flux loops. Multi-turn coils that are small enough that the magnetic field inside them can be assumed to be uniform are called magnetic probes or B-dot probes and are used to measure B .

[0004] The shape, size, and longitudinal position of an FRC plasma can be inferred from the magnetic flux excluded by the FRC plasma. A uniform magnetic field typically fills the confinement chamber of an FRC plasma confinement system prior to the initiation of the plasma. This field is represented by B_0 in Fig. 1. The diamagnetic properties of the plasma toroid, combined with the flux conserver properties of the vacuum vessel, results in the compression of the initial confinement chamber magnetic field between the FRC and wall when the plasma enters the confinement region from the formation section. The resulting field increase in the area external to the FRC, B_e in Fig. 1, is measured by magnetic probes positioned just inside the chamber wall. In the ideal case, the excluded flux radius $r_{\Delta\phi}$ is simply given by $r_{\Delta\phi} = r_w \sqrt{1 - B_0/B_e}$ where r_w is the wall radius. The excluded flux $r_{\Delta\phi}$ radius is approximately equal to the separatrix radius r_s under most conditions. The separatrix is the surface of demarcation between open and closed field lines that defines the FRC.

[0005] Monitoring the magnetic field generated by the magnet coils is an important secondary function of the magnetic diagnostics. Mistakes can occur when magnet coils are connected or in the programming of their power supplies. Therefore, it is desirable to have an independent means of verifying that the actual magnetic field in the device is the same as what was requested. Magnetic diagnostics, most of which are absolutely calibrated to known magnetic fields before installation, provide this capability.

[0006] Rather than using discrete probes and assumptions about flux conservation, there are instances where it is necessary to directly measure the quantities of interest using flux loops and annular B-dot probes. However, space and the practical number of penetrations in a vacuum vessel is always limited, which makes providing the optimum number of individual flux loops and B-dot probes difficult.

[0007] Therefore, it is desirable to provide improved flux loops and B-dot probes.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF FIGURES

[0008] The details of the example embodiments, including structure and operation, may be gleaned in part by study of the accompanying figures, in which like reference numerals refer to like parts. The components in the figures are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon illustrating the principles of the invention. Moreover, all illustrations are intended to convey concepts, where relative sizes, shapes and other detailed attributes may be illustrated schematically rather than literally or precisely.

[0009] **FIGURE 1** is an illustration of the exclusion of preexisting magnetic flux (left) by the arrival of an FRC plasma (right).

[0010] **FIGURE 2** is an end view cross-section illustration of an FRC confinement system with a combined flux loop and B-dot probe positioned therein.

[0011] **FIGURE 3** is an illustration of a three (3) wire configuration of a combined flux loop and B-dot probe of the present embodiments.

[0012] **FIGURE 4** is a cross-sectional illustration of the combined flux loop and B-dot probe take along line 4—4 in Figure 3.

[0013] **FIGURES 5, 6 and 7** are cross-sectional illustrations of alternate embodiments of the combined flux loop and B-dot probe.

[0014] It should be noted that elements of similar structures or functions are generally represented by like reference numerals for illustrative purpose throughout the figures. It should also be noted that the figures are only intended to facilitate the description of the preferred embodiments.

DESCRIPTION

[0015] Each of the additional features and teachings disclosed below can be utilized separately or in conjunction with other features and teachings to provide a combined flux loop and b-dot probe. Representative examples of the embodiments described herein, which examples utilize many of these additional features and teachings both separately and in combination, will now be described in further detail with reference to the attached drawings. This detailed description is merely intended to teach a person of skill in the art further details for practicing preferred aspects of the present teachings and is not intended to limit the scope of the invention. Therefore, combinations of features and steps disclosed in the following detail description may not be

necessary to practice the invention in the broadest sense, and are instead taught merely to particularly describe representative examples of the present teachings.

[0016] Moreover, the various features of the representative examples and the dependent claims may be combined in ways that are not specifically and explicitly enumerated in order to provide additional useful embodiments of the present teachings. In addition, it is expressly noted that all features disclosed in the description and/or the claims are intended to be disclosed separately and independently from each other for the purpose of original disclosure, as well as for the purpose of restricting the claimed subject matter independent of the compositions of the features in the embodiments and/or the claims. It is also expressly noted that all value ranges or indications of groups of entities disclose every possible intermediate value or intermediate entity for the purpose of original disclosure, as well as for the purpose of restricting the claimed subject matter.

[0017] Embodiments provided herein are directed to a combined flux loop and b-dot probe that facilitates mounting within a confinement vessel along the curvature of the vessel's internal wall. Turning to Figure 2, an FRC plasma confinement system 10 is shown comprising a confinement chamber or vessel 12, an FRC plasma 14 confined within the vessel 12, and a solenoid magnetic coil 16 positioned about the vessel 12. A combination flux loop and B-dot probe 20 is positioned about the interior wall of the vessel 12.

[0018] B-dot probes and flux loops are venerable types of plasma diagnostics that are both robust and effective. Hot plasma environments where diagnostic sensors are subject to plasma radiation and/or neutron fluence, such as, e.g., the interior of the confinement vessel 12 of the FRC plasma confinement system 10, or tokamaks and the like, require sensors that will not overheat due to plasma radiation heating and require sensor materials that can survive neutron fluence. Mineral insulated cables, which include a non-organic insulating material comprising, e.g., MgO or the like, are typically used in hot plasma environments where neutron fluence is high. *See, e.g.,* Hodapp et. al, "Magnetic diagnostics for future tokamaks," *Proceedings of 16th International Symposium on Fusion Engineering*, Champaign, IL, 1995, pp. 918-921 vol. 2, which is incorporated herein by reference.

[0019] As shown in Figures 3 and 4, the combination probe 12 preferably comprises a single mineral insulated cable having an outer sheath 26 comprising, e.g., stainless steel, Inconel, or another high-temperature metal alloy, and three (3) conductors 22 and 24 positioned within the

sheath 26 and embedded in a mineral insulator 28 comprising a non-organic mineral insulator such as, e.g., MgO, SiO₂, or another compactable insulating mineral powder. One of the conductors 22 forms a flux loop 22 that travels around the entire vessel 12 one time, is twisted on itself and exits the vessel 12. Second and third conductors form a B-dot probe 24, which is very sensitive to a variation in area. The B-dot 24 comprises a single wire that loops around the vessel 12 two (2) times. The wire 24 is shorted on one end, twisted on itself and exits the vessel 12.

[0020] In order for the flux loop 22 and the B-dot 24 probes to function properly while contained within a single mineral insulated cable, the three (3) conductors 22 and 24 of the combined probe 20 are preferably aligned perpendicular to the wall of the vessel 12. If twisting were to occur along a curved bend as the combined probe 20 is fashioned into a curved shape, it would result in a reduction in cross-section area between conductors, which tends to be problematic for the B-dot 24, which, as noted above, tends to be very sensitive to a variation in area.

[0021] Turning to Figure 5, an embodiment of the combined probe 120 includes a cable comprising three (3) ribbon wires 122 and 124, which are formed of, e.g., copper or the like, and have a generally flat, rectangular shaped cross-section. The ribbon wires 122 and 124 are stacked along their width in spaced relation. This stacked ribbon wire configuration tends to prevent twisting as the combined probe 120 is fashioned into a curved shape. Of the three ribbons, one ribbon 122 is used for a flux loop and the two other ribbons 124 preferably comprise a single ribbon forming B-dot probes.

[0022] Another embodiment of the combined probe 220 is shown in Figure 6. As depicted, the outer sheath 226 preferably comprising opposing elongate flat sides forming a generally oval, rectangular, or the like, shaped cross-section. As depicted, the sheath 226 includes opposing flat sides 225 and 227 extending between arcuate ends 221 and 223. As further depicted, the three (3) ribbon wires 122 and 124 are stacked in spaced relation along the wide flat sides 225 and 227 of the sheath 226. The oval shaped cross-sectional configuration of the sheath 226, along with the rectangular cross-sectional configuration of the ribbon wires 122 and 124 tends to further prevent the ribbon wires 122 and 124 from twisting as the combined probe 220 is fashioned into a curved shape.

[0023] In yet another embodiment of the combined probe 320 as shown in Figure 7, includes the outer sheath 226 preferably comprising opposing elongate flat sides forming a generally oval,

rectangular, or the like, shaped cross-section. As depicted, the sheath 226 includes opposing flat sides 225 and 227 extending between arcuate ends 221 and 223. However, instead of stacked flat ribbon wires, the three (3) conductors 322 and 324 may have any cross-sectional shape including, e.g., circular, square, octagonal and the like. The wide flat sides 225 and 227 of the outer sheath 226 tend to prevent the three (3) conductors 322 and 124 from twisting as the combined probe 320 is fashioned into a curved shape.

[0024] Although the embodiments presented herein were discussed with regard to an FRC plasma environment for exemplary purposes only, the embodiments presented herein may be used in a variety of hot environments subject to plasma radiation and/or neutron fluence, such as, e.g., tokamaks and the like.

[0025] The example embodiments provided herein, however, are merely intended as illustrative examples and not to be limiting in any way.

[0026] All features, elements, components, functions, and steps described with respect to any embodiment provided herein are intended to be freely combinable and substitutable with those from any other embodiment. If a certain feature, element, component, function, or step is described with respect to only one embodiment, then it should be understood that that feature, element, component, function, or step can be used with every other embodiment described herein unless explicitly stated otherwise. This paragraph therefore serves as antecedent basis and written support for the introduction of claims, at any time, that combine features, elements, components, functions, and steps from different embodiments, or that substitute features, elements, components, functions, and steps from one embodiment with those of another, even if the following description does not explicitly state, in a particular instance, that such combinations or substitutions are possible. Express recitation of every possible combination and substitution is overly burdensome, especially given that the permissibility of each and every such combination and substitution will be readily recognized by those of ordinary skill in the art upon reading this description.

[0027] In many instances entities are described herein as being coupled to other entities. It should be understood that the terms “coupled” and “connected” (or any of their forms) are used interchangeably herein and, in both cases, are generic to the direct coupling of two entities (without any non-negligible (e.g., parasitic) intervening entities) and the indirect coupling of two entities (with one or more non-negligible intervening entities). Where entities are shown as

being directly coupled together, or described as coupled together without description of any intervening entity, it should be understood that those entities can be indirectly coupled together as well unless the context clearly dictates otherwise.

[0028] While the embodiments are susceptible to various modifications and alternative forms, specific examples thereof have been shown in the drawings and are herein described in detail. It should be understood, however, that these embodiments are not to be limited to the particular form disclosed, but to the contrary, these embodiments are to cover all modifications, equivalents, and alternatives falling within the spirit of the disclosure. Furthermore, any features, functions, steps, or elements of the embodiments may be recited in or added to the claims, as well as negative limitations that define the inventive scope of the claims.

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. A plasma confinement system comprising
a confinement chamber or vessel,
a magnetic coil positioned about the vessel,
a combination probe comprising a single cable having an outer sheath and a plurality of
conductors positioned within the outer sheath, the plurality of conductors including a flux loop
and one or more B-dot probes, the combination probe being positioned about an interior wall of
the vessel, wherein the outer sheath includes first and second elongate flat sides with the first flat
side opposingly positioned in spaced relation to the second flat side, wherein individuals one of
the plurality of conductors are positioned in spaced relation to one another and the first and
second flat sides and positioned in a stacked orientation along a direction orthogonal to the first
and second flat sides.
2. The plasma confinement system of claim 1 wherein the cable comprises a mineral
insulator.
3. The plasma confinement system of claim 2 wherein the plurality of conductors
comprises three (3) conductors positioned within the outer sheath and embedded in the mineral
insulator.
4. The plasma confinement system of claim 3 wherein the outer sheath is formed of
a high-temperature metal or metal alloy.
5. The plasma confinement system of claim 4 wherein the high-temperature metal
alloy is Inconel.
6. The plasma confinement system of claim 4 wherein the high-temperature metal
alloy is stainless steel.
7. The plasma confinement system of claim 3 wherein the mineral insulator
comprises a compactable insulating mineral powder.
8. The plasma confinement system of claim 7 wherein the compactable insulating
mineral powder includes one of MgO or SiO₂.
9. The plasma confinement system of claim 3 wherein one of the three conductors
forms the flux loop comprising a single wire having a single loop.
10. The plasma confinement system of claim 9 wherein the other two of the three
conductors forms the B-dot probe comprising a single wire having a double loop.

11. The plasma confinement system of claims 1-10 wherein the conductors are ribbon wires having a generally flat, rectangular shaped cross-section.
12. The plasma confinement system of claims 1-10 wherein the outer sheath having one of an oval shaped cross-section or a rectangular shaped cross-section.
13. The plasma confinement system of claim 11 wherein the outer sheath having one of an oval shaped cross-section or a rectangular shaped cross-section.
14. The plasma confinement system of claim 12 wherein the first and second flat sides extending between arcuate ends.
15. The plasma confinement system of claim 13 wherein the first and second flat sides extending between arcuate ends.
16. A combination magnetic sensing probe comprising
a single cable having an outer sheath and
a plurality of conductors comprising a first probe and one or more second probes positioned within the outer sheath, wherein the outer sheath includes first and second elongate flat sides with the first flat side opposingly positioned in spaced relation to the second flat side, wherein individuals one of the plurality of conductors are positioned in spaced relation to one another and the first and second flat sides and positioned in a stacked orientation along a direction orthogonal to the first and second flat sides.
17. The probe of claim 16 wherein the cable comprises a mineral insulator.
18. The probe of claim 17 wherein the plurality of conductors comprises three (3) conductors positioned within the outer sheath and embedded in the mineral insulator.
19. The probe of claim 18 wherein the outer sheath is formed of a high-temperature metal or metal alloy.
20. The probe of claim 19 wherein the high-temperature metal alloy is Inconel.
21. The probe of claim 19 wherein the high-temperature metal alloy is stainless steel.
22. The probe of claim 18 wherein the mineral insulator comprises a compactable insulating mineral powder.
23. The probe of claim 22 wherein the compactable insulating mineral powder includes one of MgO or SiO₂.
24. The probe of claim 18 wherein one of the three conductors forms the flux loop for the first probe comprising a single wire having a single loop.

25. The probe of claim 24 wherein the other two of the three conductors forms the flux loop B-dot probe for the second probe comprising a single wire having a double loop.

26. The probe of claims 16-25 wherein the conductors are ribbon wires having a generally flat, rectangular shaped cross-section.

27. The probe of claims 1-25 wherein outer sheath having one of an oval shaped cross-section or a rectangular shaped cross-section.

28. The probe of claim 26 wherein the outer sheath having one of an oval shaped cross-section or a rectangular shaped cross-section.

29. The probe of claim 27 wherein the first and second flat sides extending between arcuate ends.

30. The probe of claim 28 wherein the first and second flat sides extending between arcuate ends.