Infrared-Microwave DR Experiments with NH₃

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(Z. Naturforsch. 28 a, 1707–1711 [1973]; received 7 July 1973)

Infrared-microwave double resonance experiments have been performed with ammonia. The experimental equipment consists of a microwave spectrometer and an N₂O-laser. First results are in general agreement with previous experiments of other authors. Higher resolution reveals more details of the IR-pumped ν₂[ν₀Q(8, 7)] transition. Several four-level systems were observed.

1. Introduction

Since the advent of infrared lasers, infrared-microwave double resonance (IR-MW-DR) experiments have been carried out by several groups1–9. The effect of resonant laser pumping on a MW absorption line has been first clearly observed by Shimizu and Oka7, although weak effects due to non-resonant pumping had been found earlier. These authors studied double resonance effects in some three-level and four-level systems of ammonia. In a similar experiment9 double resonance in a three-level system of formaldehyde has been observed using a 3.5 μHe-Xe laser and millimeter waves. Microwave-optical double resonance has been reported by Field et al.10.

In an IR-MW-DR experiment IR laser radiation pumps molecules from a certain rotational level of the ground vibrational state into a rotational level of an excited vibrational state. The resulting non-Boltzmann rotational distribution in the ground state is monitored by MW absorption lines.

The use of a laser to pump molecular ro-vibrational transitions is limited by the degree of coincidence of the laser line with a particular transition. Conventional IR absorption spectra provide only approximate information on the expected degree of coincidence due to the limited resolution of IR grating spectrometers. Although CO₂ or N₂O lasers emit a multitude of lines11,12, the tunability of a single line is limited to the Doppler width of the laser transition (∼60 MHz).

Before tunable IR lasers such as spin-flip Raman-lasers13–16 or Pb:Sn:Te diode lasers17,18 can be extensively used for spectroscopic purposes, recently developed methods like laser Stark spectroscopy19,20, laser magnetic resonance spectroscopy21,22 and two-photon spectroscopy23 are able to give very precise data now, but so far only few molecules have been investigated in those ways. For 14NH₃ a nearly exact coincidence with the P(13) line of the N₂O laser was found by F. Shimizu29. In our experiments we made use of this coincidence.

2. Experimental

The experimental setup consists of two parts, an IR laser and a MW spectrometer (Figure 1). The laser tube of 1.8 m length and a diameter of 22 mm is sealed with KCl-Brewster windows at both ends and cooled by water. Nitrous oxide (N₂O) or carbon dioxide is used as the active gas, to which N₂ and He is added, giving a total pressure of about 5 or 9 Torr, respectively. A stabilized discharge current of about 30 mA is used.

The laser cavity consists of a blazed grating (711/2 mm) and a partially transmitting germanium mirror through which the power is coupled out.

The DR-measurements were performed with a concave mirror (radius of curvature 10 m, reflectivity 80 percent) and a flat one with a reflectivity of 95 percent. The IR power level inside the cell lay typically between 80 and 500 mW. Higher output power, which could be delivered by the laser, was avoided in the DR measurements with respect to the thermal sensibility of the grating (replica!). The laser spectrum was analyzed with a grating monochromator (Hilger & Watts, D300). A chopper wheel inside the resonator provides square wave intensity modulation of the beam with a frequency of 1180 Hz. CW-power is measured by a thermopile (Coherent Radiation Lab., model 201 power meter).

To isolate the laser from floor vibrations it is mounted on a concrete slab (300 × 25 × 15 cm²) which is sitting on three soft rubber pieces. Stabilizing the laser output by piezoelectrically tuning the cavity was not attempted so far.

The DR-cell is built from a 4 m long waveguide of dimensions 58.17 × 29.083 mm². This cross
section, which is oversized compared with the (free space) wavelength around 1.3 cm used in this experiment, was chosen to reduce wall collisions. A Stark electrode was asymmetrically positioned in the cell to prevent it from being hit by the laser beam. The parallel IR-beam was coupled in and out of the cell by 90°-bends (E-corner), made of waveguide material, which were sealed by NaCl-windows of 6 mm thickness. The coupling knees showed serious reflections of the MW-radiation. As an alternative solution an oversized 3-dB-K-band directional coupler was constructed, by the use of which the reflections could be reduced, but not avoided. The cell temperature can be lowered from room temperature to —90°C to increase sensitivity.

Phase-stabilized backward wave oscillators (CSF and Varian) serve as MW-sources. 33 kHz Stark-modulation can be used in addition to IR modulation (1180 Hz).

The sensitivity of the MW spectrometer part of the apparatus was tested with the well-known $^{16}$C$^{18}$S$^{34}$-isotope line ($0 \rightarrow 1$) at 11.82347 GHz. This line could be recorded with a S/N ratio of about 10. Two hyperfine components (209 kHz apart) of a particular transition of allylamine ($1_{1,0} \rightarrow 1_{0,1}$ at 19.802 GHz) were used to test the resolution, which was found to be better than 200 kHz. The double resonance spectrometer was tested with ammonia as shown in the following chapter.

3. Results

The $P(13)$ line of $\text{N}_2\text{O}$ at 927.7425 cm$^{-1}$ coincides almost exactly with the infrared transition $v_2[a^4Q(8, 7)]$ of ammonia (Figure 2). Together with the (8, 7) inversion transition of the ground vibrational state it forms a three-level system. Due
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Our results of the pressure dependence of $\Delta I/I$ come close to those reported by Shimizu and Oka (upper curve in Figure 3)\textsuperscript{8}. The designation “high power” and “low power” corresponds to IR-power densities of about 300 and 100 mW cm$^{-2}$, respectively. With a “high power” radiation and a sample pressure of 10 mTorr an increase in line intensity of approximately 60% was observed. At lower pressures the ratio $\Delta I/I$ increases steadily. At pressures below 0.5 mTorr the pumping becomes very efficient. To compare our curves with those of Shimizu we must take into account an uncertainty in our pressure measurement up to a factor of 3.

Our seemingly lower efficiency at higher pressures can be accounted for by the fact that in contrast to Shimizu’s arrangement our IR beam pumps only about 1/5 to 1/7 of the molecules interacting with the microwaves. Figure 4 shows a comparison between a normal microwave absorption line and the laser pumped absorption line. Pressure is below 0.5 mTorr.

Although the IR beam, which has a diameter of 12 mm at the cell entrance, diverges slightly within the cell, a considerable part of the power can be coupled out at the end of the cell for measurement purposes (alignment, control of laser operation, rough check of molecular absorption) and to prevent the MW-diode from being irradiated by too much IR power. If the power meter is replaced by a plane mirror the beam can be reflected for a second pass through the cell, thus enhancing the IR power in the interaction region. Figure 5 shows a comparison between three recordings: MW absorption without IR, the signal pumped by one pass of the IR beam, and the signal pumped with a reflected double-pass beam.

Shimizu and Oka have calculated the pumping effect on the MW line (8, 7) assuming that the Boltzmann distribution is disturbed only in the pumped levels and that the spectral width of the pump is small compared with the Doppler width. They derived \textsuperscript{8}:

$$
\frac{\Delta I}{I} = \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{kT}{\hbar v_M} \right) \sqrt{\pi} \gamma^2 (\delta v)^{-1} \left[ \left( \frac{1}{2 \pi T} \right)^\frac{1}{2} + \gamma^2 \right]^{-\frac{1}{2}} \exp \left[ - \frac{(v_L - v_0)^2}{(\delta v)^2} \right]
$$

$v_M$ MW frequency,
$\gamma = |\mu E_p|/\hbar$ 900 kHz in this experiment,
\( \delta v \) Doppler width of the IR transition \( v_2[Q'(8, 7)] \) of NH\(_3\),

\( \frac{1}{2\pi} \tau \) relaxation frequency, 26 kHz at 1 mTorr,

\( v_L - v_0 \) difference between laser and transition frequency, 7.4 \( \pm \) 1 MHz in this case.

General agreement with experimental values is found only at pressures above 5 mTorr, using the values mentioned above. At pressures below 1 mTorr the experimental values lie far above those calculated.

When the IR beam is chopped at 1180 Hz, the signal obtained by phase sensitive detection without Stark-modulation corresponds to the absolute change in MW absorption intensity due to IR pumping. Figure 6 shows a recording of the same line as on Figs. 4 and 5 but with IR instead of Stark modulation. The advantage of this method, compared with Stark modulation, is that no Stark lobes disturb the line shape and only the effect of the IR pumping is observed.

As the separation of the different hyperfine levels of the (8, 7) rotational state of NH\(_3\) does not exceed 2 MHz, which is small compared to the Doppler width of the IR transition \( v_2[Q'(8, 7)] \), all those levels are pumped by the laser radiation. Therefore hyperfine components should be expected in the DR spectrum. Resolution and sensitivity of our spectrometer are high enough that two pairs of hfs components, sitting symmetrically on each side of the main line at a distance of approximately 1.5 and 1.8 MHz, can be clearly seen in double resonance. Figure 6 shows three of them. This hfs pattern was also observed in the pure MW-spectrum at the same frequencies which agree within experimental errors, with the calculated values.

Considerations different from those of three-level systems apply to experiments with "four-level" systems. Here, a rotational transition is monitored which has no level in common with the pump transition. However, the two rotational levels monitored are connected with the pumped levels by relaxation processes. For reasons which have collectively been termed "collisional selection rules" the relaxation rates are in general different for different pairs of rotational levels. Therefore, applying the pump radiation will in many cases change the intensity of even those rotational transitions which are not directly connected with the pumping transition.

Again the \( v_2[Q'(8, 7)] \) IR transition was pumped by the P(13) laser line for the investigation of four-level systems. The change in intensity upon pumping is of course not nearly as large as had been observed in the three-level system. The collision induced (9, 7) and (7, 7) transitions had been observed earlier by Shimizu and Oka. In addition to these we have found several other 4-level systems. So far we have tested 20 transitions between 18 and 24 GHz by IR modulation and phase sensitive detection at 1180 Hz. Among these we found 14 lines which show an effect upon pump-
Fig. 6. Recording of the (8, 7) IR-MW double resonance signal obtained by applying IR-modulation at 1180 Hz and phase-sensitive detection of the MW-absorption signal. Hyperfine structure components were also observed (arrows). Power density is about 100 mW • cm\(^{-2}\).

Fig. 7. Recording of the MW-transitions (2, 1) and (9, 7) of \(^{14}\text{NH}_3\), not directly connected with the pumped transition (4-level systems) in double resonance applying pure IR-modulation at 1180 Hz. Power density is about 300 mW • cm\(^{-2}\). Pressure is about 10 mTorr. Scale is not the same for both recordings. The (9, 7) line is about 20 times larger than the (2, 1) line.

The relative change in MW absorption intensity, \(\Delta I/I\), is strongly different for different collision-induced transitions. At 10 mTorr the highest value of \(\Delta I/I\) between 18 and 24 GHz was found for the (9, 7) line (\(\Delta I/I \approx 3\%\)). This is about 40 times larger than the highest value of \(\Delta I/I\) found for the other lines at this pressure. This seems to support the validity of the \(\Delta J = 1, \Delta K = 0\) and parity (+ → −) collisional selection rules governing the transitions induced by \(\text{NH}_3−\text{NH}_3\) collisions\(^29\). However, although \(\Delta J\) and \(\Delta K\) is large for some lines — see for example the (2, 1) line — these lines have also been clearly observed. Measurements are in progress. Results will be published elsewhere\(^31\).

4. Acknowledgement

We appreciate the aid of Mr. A. Eyer and Mr. F. Kohler for carrying out a large number of measurements. The support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and the Fonds der Chemischen Industrie is gratefully acknowledged. The authors wish to thank Farbwerke Hoechst for repeated gifts of N\(_2\)O.

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