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Interference over large distance between two ferromagnetic resonances via hybridization to circularly polarized phonons

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Abstract

We report ferromagnetic resonance in the normal configuration of an electrically insulating magnetic bi-layer consisting of two yttrium iron garnet (YIG) films epitaxially grown on both sides of a 0.5 mm thick non-magnetic gadolinium gallium garnet (GGG) slab. An interference pattern is observed and it is explained as the strong coupling of the magnetization dynamics of the two YIG layers either in-phase or out-of-phase by the standing transverse sound waves, which are excited through the magneto-elastic interaction. This coherent mediation of angular momentum by circularly polarized phonons through a non-magnetic material over macroscopic distances can be useful for future information technologies.

The renewed interest in using acoustic oscillators as coherent signal transducers [1–3] stems from the extreme finesse of acoustic signal transmission lines. The low sound attenuation factor η_a benefits the interconversion process into other wave forms (with damping η_s) as measured by the cooperativity, $\mathcal{C} = \Omega^2/(2\eta_a\eta_s)$ [4, 5], leading to strong coupling as defined by $\mathcal{C} > 1$ even when the coupling strength Ω is small. Here we present experimental evidence for coherent long-distance transport of angular momentum via the coupling to circularly polarized sound waves that exceeds previous benchmarks set by magnon diffusion [6–8] by orders of magnitude.

The material of choice for magnonics is yttrium iron garnet (YIG) with the lowest magnetic damping reported so far [9, 10]. The ultrasonic attenuation coefficient in garnets is also exceptional, *i.e.* up to an order of magnitude lower than that in single crystalline quartz [11, 12]. Spin-waves (magnons) hybridize with lattice vibrations (phonons) by the magnetic anisotropy and strain dependence of the magneto-crystalline energy [13–18]. Although often weak in absolute terms, the magneto-elasticity leads to new hybrid quasiparticles (“magnon polarons”) when spin-wave (SW) and acoustic-wave (AW) dispersions (anti)cross [19–21]. This coupling has been exploited in the past to produce microwave acoustic transducers [22, 23], parametric acoustic oscillators [24] or nonreciprocal acoustic wave rotation [25, 26]. Recent studies have identified their beneficial effects on spin transport in thin YIG films by pump-and-probe Kerr microscopy [27, 28] and in the spin Seebeck effect [29]. The adiabatic conversion between magnons and phonons in magnetic field gradients proves their strong coupling in YIG [30].

But phonons excited by magnetization dynamics can also transfer their angular momentum into an adjacent non-magnetic dielectrics [32, 33]. When the latter acts as a phonon sink, the “phonon pumping” increases the magnetic damping [34]. The substrate of choice for YIG is single crystal gadolinium gallium garnet (GGG) which in itself has very long phonon mean-free path [35, 36] and small impedance mismatch with YIG [37], raising the hope of a phonon-mediated dynamic exchange of coherence through a non-magnetic insulating layer [34].

Here we report ferromagnetic resonance experiments (FMR) of a “dielectric spin-valve” stack consisting of half a millimeter thick single-crystal GGG slab coated on both sides by thin YIG films. We demonstrate that GGG can be an excellent conductor of phononic angular momentum currents allowing the coherent coupling between the two magnets over

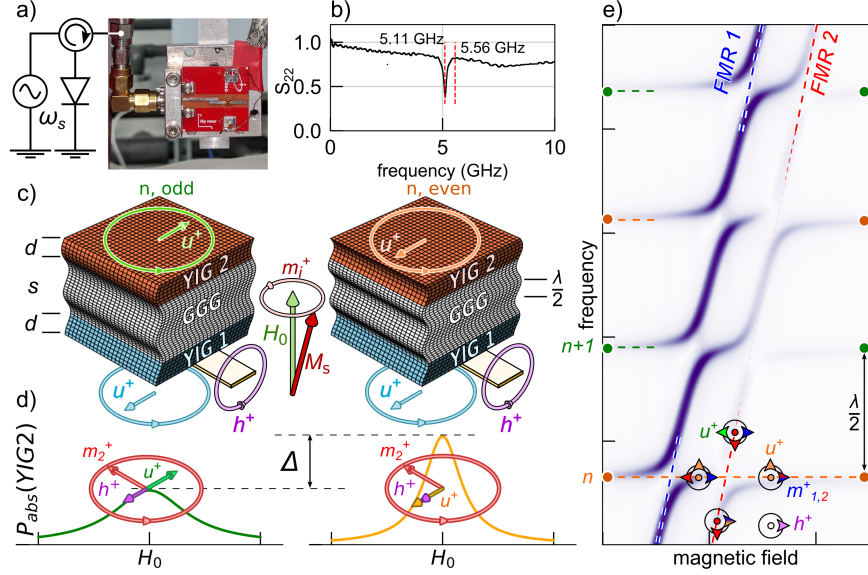


FIG. 1. (Color online) a) Schematic and picture of the ferromagnetic resonance (FMR) setup. A butterfly shaped stripline resonator [31] with 0.3 mm wide constriction is in contact with the bottom layer of the YIG1($d = 200$ nm)|GGG($s = 0.5$ mm)|YIG2($d = 200$ nm) “dielectric spin-valve” stack. The microwave antenna can be tuned in or out of its fundamental resonance (5.11 GHz) as shown in the reflectivity spectrum b). c) Schematic of the coupling between the top (red) and bottom (blue) YIG layers by the exchange of coherent phonons: the magnetic precession m^+ generates a circular shear deformation u^+ of the lattice that can be tuned into a coherent motion of all fields. Constructive/destructive interference between the dynamics of the two YIG layers occurs for even/odd mode numbers n causing d) a contrast Δ in the absorbed microwave power (P_{abs}) between tones separated by half a phonon wavelength. e) Density plot of the spectral modulation of P_{abs} produced by Eq.(1) when magnetic bi-layers are strongly coupled to coherent phonon modes. The orange/green dots indicate the spectral position of the even/odd acoustic resonances.

millimeter distance. Figure 1a illustrates the experimental setup in which an inductive antenna monitors the coherent part of the magnetization dynamics. The spectroscopic signature of the dynamic coupling between the two YIG layers is a resonant contrast pattern as a function of microwave frequency (see intensity modulation along FMR2 in Figure 1e).

Before turning to the experimental details, we sketch a simple phenomenological model that captures the dynamics of the fields as described by the continuum model for magnetoelasticity with proper boundary conditions [34]. The perpendicular dynamics of a trilayer

with in-plane translational symmetry can be mapped on three coupled harmonic oscillators, viz. the Kittel modes of the two magnetic layers $m_{i=1,2}$ and the n -th mechanical mode, u_n , in the dielectric, which obey the coupled set of equations

$$(\omega_s - \omega_1 + j\eta_s)m_1^+ = \Omega_1 u_n^+/2 + \kappa_1 h^+ \quad (1a)$$

$$(\omega_s - \omega_2 + j\eta_s)m_2^+ = \Omega_2 u_n^+/2 + \kappa_2 h^+ \quad (1b)$$

$$(\omega_s - \omega_n + j\eta_a) u_n^+ = \Omega_1 m_1^+/2 + \Omega_2 m_2^+/2 \quad (1c)$$

Here $\omega_n/(2\pi) = v/\lambda_n$, where v is the AW velocity and $\lambda_n/2 = (2d+s)/n$ is a half wavelength that fits into the total sample thickness $2d+s$, with n being an integer (mode number). The dynamic quantities $m_i^+ = (m_x + jm_y)_i$ are circularly polarized magnetic complex amplitudes (j being the imaginary unit) precessing anti-clockwise around the equilibrium magnetization at Kittel resonance frequencies $\omega_1 \neq \omega_2$. In our notation $\eta_{s/a}$ are the magnetic/acoustic relaxation rates [38] and the constants Ω_i and κ_i are the magneto-elastic interaction and inductive coupling to the antenna, respectively. Coherence effects between m_1 and m_2 can be monitored by the power $P_{\text{abs}} = \kappa_i \text{Im}(h^* m_i)$ as a function of the microwave frequency ω_s of the driving field with circular amplitude h^+ [39]. Note that Eq.(1) holds when the characteristic AW decay length exceeds the film thickness (see below).

The acoustic modes with odd and even symmetry couple with opposite signs, i.e. $\Omega_2 = (-1)^n \Omega_1$ (see Figure 1c), which affects the dynamics as sketched in Figure 1d. When n is odd (even), the top layer returns (absorbs) the power from the electromagnetic field, because the phonon amplitude is out-of(in) phase with the direct excitation, corresponding to constructive (destructive) interference. In other words, the phonons pumped by the dynamics of the layer 1 are absorbed vs. reflected by layer 2. According to Eq.(1), a contrast Δ should emerge between tones separated by half a wavelength. This is illustrated in Figure 1e by plotting the calculated modulation of the magnetic absorption when two Kittel modes with slightly different resonance frequencies and different inductive coupling to the antenna interact via strong coupling to coherent phonons (see below values in Table.(I)). In the figure the effect is more visible around the resonance of the layer with weaker coupling $\kappa_2 < \kappa_1$ to the antenna (FMR2, red dashed line) since, according to the model, the amplitude of the contrast is proportional to the amplitude ratio of the microwave magnetic fields felt by the two YIG layers: $\Delta \propto \kappa_1/\kappa_2$. We employ here a stripline with width (0.3 mm) that couples strongly to the lower layer YIG1, while still allowing to monitor the FMR absorption

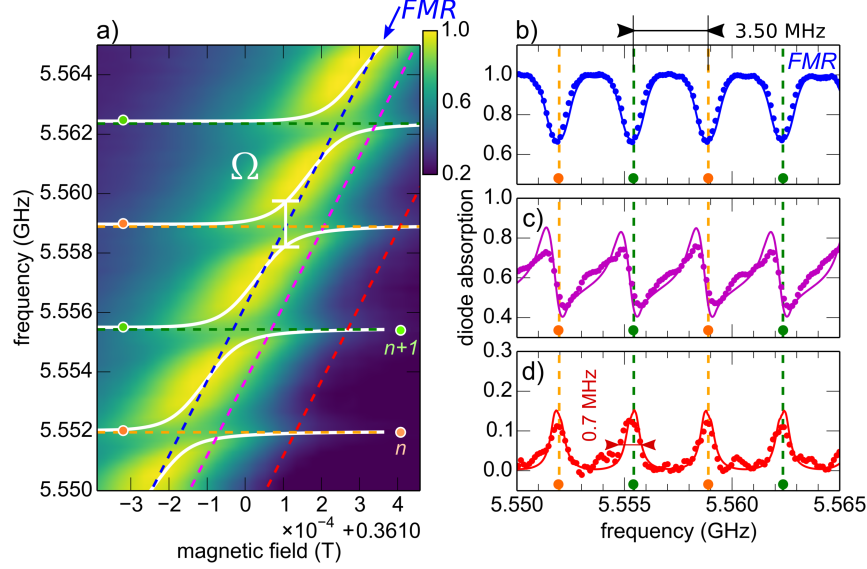


FIG. 2. (Color online) a) Microwave absorption spectra of a YIG(200 nm)|GGG(0.5 mm) crystal, revealing a periodic modulation of the intensity interpreted as the avoided-crossing between the FMR mode (see blue arrow) at $\omega_1 = \gamma\mu_0(H_0 - M_1)$, and the n^{th} standing (shear) AW_n resonances across the total thickness (horizontal dash lines in orange and green) at $\omega_n = n\pi v/(d + s)$. The right panels (b,c,d) show the intensity modulation for 3 different cuts (blue, magenta and red) along the gyromagnetic ratio (*i.e.* parallel to the resonance condition). The solid lines in the 4 panels are fits by the oscillator model (cf. Eq.(1) with fit values in Table.(I)).

of YIG2.[40]

Figure 1a is a picture of the bow-tie $\lambda/2$ -resonator (with reflectivity spectrum shown in Figure 1b) with which we perform spectroscopy around 5 GHz. The later fulfills the “half-wave condition” of the phonon relative to the YIG thickness that maximizes the phonon pumping [34]. The sample was grown by liquid phase epitaxy, *i.e.* by immersing a GGG monocrystal substrate with thickness $s = 0.5$ mm and orientation (111) into molten YIG. The concomitant growth leads to nominally identical YIG layers, with thickness $d = 200$ nm on both sides of the GGG. The Gilbert damping parameter $\alpha \approx 9 \times 10^{-5}$, measured as the slope of the frequency dependence of the line width, is evidence for the high crystal quality. All experiments have been carried out at room temperature and on the same sample. Because of that, the results shall be presented in inverse chronological order.

Having removed YIG2 by mechanical polishing, we first concentrate on the dynamic behavior of a single magnetic layer. Figure 2a shows the FMR absorption of YIG1|GGG

bilayer [41–44] around 5.56 GHz *i.e.* for a detuned antenna having weak inductive coupling. These spectra are acquired in the perpendicular configuration, where the magnetic precession is circular, by magnetizing the sample with a sufficiently strong external magnetic field, H_0 , applied along the normal of the films. Figure 2a provides a detailed view of the fine structure within the FMR absorption that is obtained when one sweeps the field/frequency in tiny steps of 0.01 mT/0.1 MHz, respectively.

The FMR mode (see arrow) follows the Kittel equation $\omega_1 \approx \gamma\mu_0(H_0 - M_1)$ [45], with $\gamma/(2\pi) = 28.5$ GHz/T, the gyromagnetic ratio and $\mu_0 M_1 = 0.1720$ T, the saturation magnetization, but its intensity vs. frequency is periodically modulated [42, 46] which we explain by the hybridization with the comb of standing shear AWs described by Eq.(1) truncated to one magnetic layer.

We ascribe the periodicity of 3.50 MHz in the signal of Figures 2 to the equidistant splitting of standing phonon modes governed by the *transverse* sound velocity of GGG along (111) of $v = 3.53 \times 10^3$ m/s [42, 46, 47] via $v/(2d + 2s) \approx 3.53$ MHz [48]. This value thus separates two phononic tones, which differ by half a wavelength. At 5.5 GHz, the intercept between the transverse AW and SW dispersion relations occurs at $2\pi/\lambda_n = \omega_s/v \approx 10^5$ cm⁻¹, which corresponds to a phonon wavelength of about $\lambda_n \approx 700$ nm with index number $n \sim 1400$. The modulation is strong evidence for the high acoustic quality that allows elastic waves to propagate coherently with a decay length exceeding twice the film thickness, *i.e.* 1 mm. For later reference we point out that the absorption is the same for odd and even phonon modes, whose eigen-values are indicated here by green and orange dots.

In Figures 2bcd we focus on the line shapes at detunings parallel to the FMR resonance as a function of field and frequency indicated by the blue, magenta, and red cuts in Figure 2a. The amplitude of the main resonance (blue line) in Figure 2b dips and the lines broaden at the phonon frequencies [42, 46]. The minima transform via dispersive-looking signal (magenta in 2ac) into peaks (red 2ad) once sufficiently far from the Kittel resonance as expected from the complex impedance of two detuned resonant circuits, illustrating a constant phase between m_i and u_n along these cuts. The m_i are circularly polarized fields rotating in the gyromagnetic direction, that interact only with acoustic waves u_n with the same polarity, as implemented in Eq. (1) [30].

The observed line shapes can be used to extract the lifetime parameters in Eq. (1). We first concentrate on the observed 0.7 MHz full line width of the acoustic resonances in

Figure 2d. Far from the Kittel condition, the absorbed power is governed by the sound attenuation. According to Eq. (1), the absorbed power at large detuning reduces to $P_{\text{abs}} \propto ((\omega_s - \omega_n)^2 + \eta_a^2)^{-1}$. The AW decay rate $\eta_a/(2\pi) = 0.35$ MHz is obtained as the half line width of the acoustic resonance, leading to a characteristic decay length $\delta = v/\eta_a \approx 2$ mm for AW excited around 5.5 GHz. The acoustic amplitude therefore decays by $\sim 20\%$ over the half millimeter film thickness. The sound amplitude in both magnetic layers are therefore roughly the same, as assumed in Eq.(1). This figure is consistent with the measured ultrasonic attenuation in GGG: 0.70 dB/ μ s at 1GHz [36, 49], *i.e.*, a lifetime of about 0.5 μ s at 5GHz.

The SW lifetime $1/\eta_s$ follows from the broadening of the absorbed power at the Kittel condition which contains a constant inhomogeneous contribution and a frequency-dependent viscous damping term. When plotted as function of frequency, the former is the extrapolation of the line widths to zero frequency, in our case ~ 5.7 MHz (or 0.2 mT). On the other hand, the Gilbert phenomenology (see above) of the homogeneous broadening $\eta_s = \alpha\omega_s$ corresponds to a $\eta_s/(2\pi) = 0.50$ MHz at 5.5 GHz. The dominantly inhomogeneous broadening is here caused by thickness variations, a spatially dependent magnetic anisotropy, but also by the inhomogeneous microwave field.

Conspicuous features in Figure 2a are the clearly resolved avoided-crossing of SW and AW dispersion relations, which prove the strong coupling between two oscillators. Fitting by hand the dispersions of two coupled oscillators through the data points (white lines), we extract a gap of $\Omega/(2\pi) = 1$ MHz and a large cooperativity $\mathcal{C} \approx 3$. From the overlap integral between a standing shear AW confined in a layer of thickness $\sim s$ and the Kittel mode confined in a layer of thickness d , one can derive the analytical expression for the magneto-elastic coupling strength [42, 50]:

$$\Omega = \frac{B}{\sqrt{2}} \sqrt{\frac{\gamma}{\omega_s M_1 \rho s d}} \left(1 - \cos \omega_s \frac{d}{v} \right) \quad (2)$$

where [35] $B = (B_2 + 2B_1)/3 = 7 \times 10^5$ J/m³, with B_1 and B_2 being the magneto-elastic coupling constants for a cubic crystal, and $\rho = 5.1$ g/cm³ is the mass density of YIG. From Eq.(2) we infer that coherent SW excited around $\omega_s/(2\pi) \approx 5.5$ GHz have a dynamic coupling to shear AW of the order of $\Omega/(2\pi) = 1.5$ MHz, close to the value extracted from the experiments.

The material parameters extracted for our YIG|GGG are summarized in Table (I). Numerical solutions of Eq. (1) using these values are shown as solid lines in Figure 2bcd. The

TABLE I. Material parameters used in the oscillator model (all values are expressed in units of $2\pi \times 10^6$ rad/s).

$\omega_1 - \omega_2$	$\omega_{n+1} - \omega_n$	Ω	η_s	η_a
40	3.50	1.0	0.50	0.35

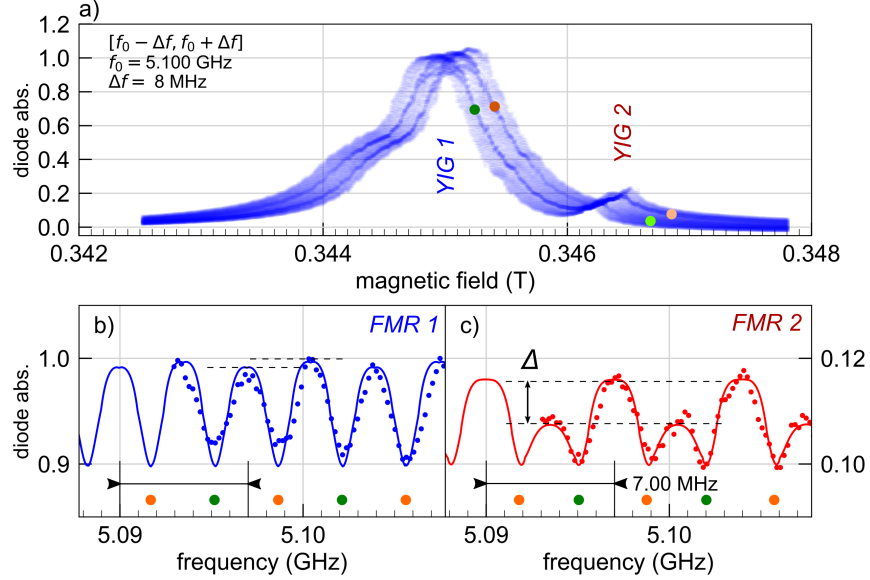


FIG. 3. (Color online) FMR spectroscopy of the YIG1|GGG|YIG2 trilayer. Panel a) is a transparent overlay of magnetic field sweeps for frequencies in the interval 5.100 ± 0.008 GHz by 0.1 MHz steps. Dark lines reveal two acoustic resonances marked by orange and green dots. Panel b) and c) show the frequency modulation of the FMR amplitude for respectively the bottom YIG1 layer and the top YIG2 layer, in which a contrast Δ appears between neighboring acoustic resonances. The solid lines show the modulation predicted by Eq.(1).

agreement with the data is excellent, confirming the validity of the model and parameters.

The other needed parameter for solving Eq.(1) in the general case is the attenuation ratio $\kappa_2/\kappa_1 \approx 7$ deducted from a factor of 50 decreased power when flipping the single YIG layer sample upside down on the antenna. The layer is then separated 0.5 mm from the antenna, and the observed reduction agrees with numerical simulations using electromagnetic field solvers.

We turn now our attention to the magnetic sandwich in which YIG1 touches the antenna and the nominally identical YIG2 is 0.5 mm away, where a slight difference in uniaxial

anisotropy causes separate resonance frequencies. Since we want to detect also the resonance of the top layer, we have to compensate for the decrease in inductive coupling by tuning the source frequency to the antenna resonance at 5.11 GHz (see Figure 1b). This enhances the signal by the quality factor $Q \sim 30$ of the cavity at the cost of an increased radiative damping of the bottom layer signal [51].

Figure 3a is a transparent overlay of field sweeps for frequency steps of 0.1 MHz in the interval 5.100 ± 0.008 GHz. We attribute the two peaks separated by 1.4 mT (or 40 MHz) to the bottom and top YIG Kittel resonances, the later shifted due to a slight difference in effective magnetization $\mu_0 M_2 = \mu_0 M_1 + 0.0014$ T. Note that the detuning between the two Kittel modes is large compared to the strength of the magneto-elastic coupling Ω . In Figure 3b and Figure 3c we compare the measured modulation of the resonance amplitude for respectively the bottom YIG1 layer and top YIG2 layers. This corresponds to performing 2 cuts at the resonance condition FMR1 and FMR2 in the same fashion as Figure 2b. The top YIG2 signal is modulated with a period of 7.00 MHz (Figure 3c) with a contrast Δ between even and odd modes. This agrees with the prediction of Eq.(1) (see solid lines) due to constructive/destructive couplings mediated by even/odd phonon modes, the modulation period of the absorbed power doubles along the resonance of the top layer (FMR2), when compared to the case of a single YIG layer (Figure 2). Figure 3b illustrates also that the strong coupling κ_1 to the antenna hinders clear observation of this modulation in the bottom YIG1 layer resonance. Nevertheless, the anticipated sign change of Δ (by the inverted phase of u_n relative to m_2 in Eq.(1)) between FMR1 and FMR2 remains observable.

We now address the acoustic resonances revealed by the dark lines in Figure 3a for odd/even indices labeled by green/orange circles in the wings. The phonon line with even index (orange marker) progressively disappears when approaching the YIG2 Kittel resonance from the low field (left side) of the resonance, while the opposite behavior is observed for the odd index feature (green marker), which disappears when approaching the YIG2 Kittel resonance from the high field (right side). This behavior agrees with the model in Figure 1e. The contrast in the acoustic resonance intensity mirrors the contrast of the amplitude of the FMR resonance.

Figure 4a shows the observed FMR absorption spectrum around 5.11 GHz measured at fixed field $H_0 = 0.3453$ T. We enhance the fine structure in Figure 4b by subtracting the FMR envelope and progressively amplifying the weak signals in the wings. The orange/green

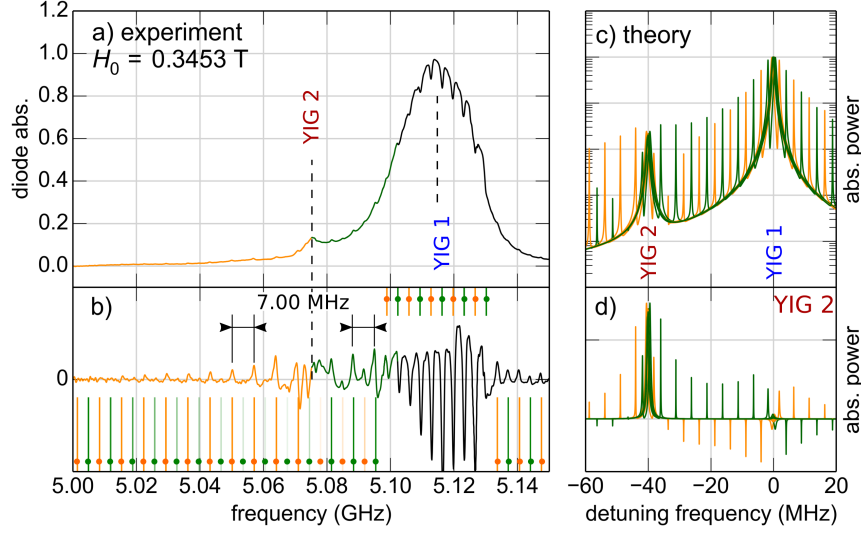


FIG. 4. (Color online) a) Frequency sweep at fixed field performed on the magnetic bi-layer. The fine regular modulation within the FMR envelop is ascribed to the excitation of acoustic shear waves resonances. The acoustic pattern is enhanced in panel b) by subtracting the FMR envelop emphasizing the constructive/destructive interferences of the even/odd acoustic resonances in the vicinity of the YIG2 FMR mode. Panel c) shows on a logarithmic scale the predicted modulation using the experimental parameters of Table.(I). Panel d) shows on a linear scale the corresponding power absorbed by the top magnetic layer only.

color code emphasizes the constructive/destructive interference of the even/odd acoustic resonances in the top-layer signal. This feature can be explained by Eq. (1), as shown by the calculated curves in Figure 4cd. The acoustic modes change character from even to odd (or vice versa) across the FMR frequency, which is caused by the associated phase shift by 180° of the acoustic drive, again explaining the experiments. The absorption by the YIG2 top layer in Figure 4d may even become negative so the phonon current from YIG1 drives the magnetization in YIG2. This establishes both angular momentum and power transfer of microwave radiation via phonons.

In summary, we report interferences between the Kittel resonances of two ferromagnets over macroscopic distance through the exchange of circularly polarized coherent shear waves propagating in a nonmagnetic dielectric. We show that magnets are a source and detector for phononic angular momentum currents and that these currents provide a coupling, analogous to the dynamic coupling in metallic spin valves [52], but with an insulating spacer, over much

larger distances, and in the ballistic/coherent rather than diffuse/dissipative regime. This should lead to new collective behaviors when the two Kittel resonances are tuned within the strength of the magneto-elastic coupling. Our findings might have implications on the non-local spin transport experiments [53], in which phonons provide a parallel channel for the transport of angular momentum. While the present experiments are carried out at room temperature and interpreted classically, the high acoustic quality of phonon transport and the strong coupling to the magnetic order in insulators may be useful for quantum communication.

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