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How to dress radio-frequency photons with tunable momentum

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We demonstrate how the combination of oscillating magnetic forces and radio-frequency (RF) pulses endows RF photons with tunable momentum. We observe velocity-selective spinflip transitions and the associated Doppler shift. Recoil-dressed photons are a promising tool for measurements and quantum simulations, including the realization of gauge potentials and spin-orbit coupling schemes which don't involve optical transitions.

The field of cooling and trapping atoms depends on mechanical forces exerted by light through photon recoil [1]. Since photons can be scattered only by admixing electronically excited states, the mechanical forces due to light always involve dissipation by spontaneous emission. This is desirable in laser cooling but causes heating and atom loss in other situations where it is often suppressed by using far off resonant light (e.g., in optical lattices).

In this work we show how to dress radio-frequency (RF) photons with tunable recoil momentum by combining RF pulses with an oscillating magnetic force. This is a new application of Floquet engineering: periodically driven systems can have time-averaged properties which cannot be achieved with constant fields. Well-known examples are the Kapitza pendulum, Paul traps for ions, and the realization of Hamiltonians with complex tunneling matrix elements for ultracold atoms in optical lattices [2–4].

The question how to replace photon recoil by other forces was raised in the context of spin-orbit coupling for ultracold atoms [5]. The well-established two-photon scheme is limited by heating due to spontaneous emission of photons. This limitation has motivated the development of alternative schemes which use time-dependent magnetic fields [6–9] to realize spin-dependent synthetic gauge fields. Some of those schemes are fairly complex, and have motivated the question: is it possible to Floquet engineer an RF or microwave transition between two spin states in such a way that it shows all aspects of recoil momentum?

With this motivation, we propose and demonstrate the new concept of recoil-dressed RF photons. This scheme allows to conduct Doppler-sensitive spectroscopy and velocimetry of molecules when suitable optical transitions are not available. It is a building block for quantum simulations, and offers a new approach for spin-orbit coupling using time-dependent magnetic forces. In our scheme, we drive RF transitions between two different hyperfine states in the presence of an alternating magnetic field gradient. The time-averaged evolution is an RF transi-

tion where recoil momentum is transferred. The sign and magnitude of the momentum kick is adjustable via the magnetic fields, and we observe a recoil momentum for the dressed photon which is 6×10^6 higher than the (usually negligible) momentum of a bare RF photon around 8 MHz frequency.

Our scheme shows the power of Floquet engineering: we combine an RF transition, which has negligible momentum transfer, with a sinusoidally oscillating magnetic field gradient, which has no time-averaged momentum transfer, and the result is an RF photon with recoil, depending on how RF pulses are synchronized with the time-dependent magnetic field gradient.

Figure 1 shows the time sequence of our scheme, which consists of a sinusoidal spin-dependent force $f(t) = g_F \mu_B B'_0 \sin(\frac{2\pi}{T}t + \phi_{RF})\sigma_z$, where g_F is the Lande factor, μ_B is the Bohr magneton and B'_0 is the magnitude of the magnetic gradient, and a synchronized sequence of short RF pulses at times $t = 0, T, 2T, \dots$. The timing of the pulses with respect to the periodic force is described by the phase ϕ_{RF} which determines the magnitude of the photon recoil. Each of the RF pulses couples spin-up and spin-down states with the same momentum (i.e. at the time of the RF pulse) velocity v_{RF} . For $\phi_{RF} = 0$ the velocities averaged over a full cycle of the oscillating force, $\langle v_{\uparrow} \rangle$ and $\langle v_{\downarrow} \rangle$ are different. By flipping the spin, atoms experience an “extra” half-cycle of the magnetic acceleration (hatched area in Fig. 1(a)), which transfer them to the state with a different averaged velocity, and, therefore, provides recoil. For the case $\phi_{RF} = \pi/2$, the time-averaged velocities for spin-up and spin-down are identical to v_{RF} . Therefore, an RF transition will not change the time-averaged velocities, and there is no recoil.

Using this semiclassical picture, we obtain for the amount of momentum transfer $\hbar k = m(\langle v_{\uparrow} \rangle - \langle v_{\downarrow} \rangle) = \hbar k_0 \cos \phi_{RF}$, where $k_0 = \frac{g_F \mu_B}{\pi \hbar} B'_0 T$. Next we discuss where the change in kinetic energy comes from. For an optical transition with recoil $\hbar k$ and an atom moving at initial velocity v_{in} , the resonance frequency is shifted by

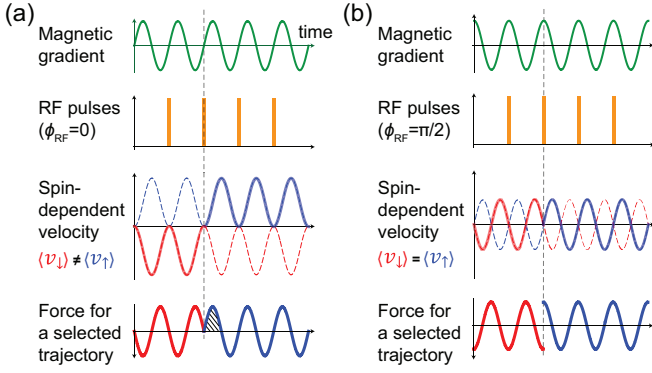


FIG. 1. Illustration of our scheme for creating a tunable atomic recoil momentum with RF transitions using magnetic forces. (a) & (b) shows the experimental conditions for $\phi_{RF} = 0$ and $\phi_{RF} = \pi/2$, respectively. The spin-dependent forces and velocities are shown (as thick solid lines) for the amplitude of the wavefunction which is transferred from spin down (red) to up (blue) by the RF pulse marked by the gray dashed line. For $\phi_{RF} = 0$, the average velocities $\langle v_{\downarrow} \rangle$ and $\langle v_{\uparrow} \rangle$ are different, which implies a finite recoil associated with the spin-flip. In contrast, $\langle v_{\downarrow} \rangle = \langle v_{\uparrow} \rangle$ for $\phi_{RF} = \pi/2$ and there is no recoil.

the Doppler shift kv_{in} and recoil shift $(\hbar k)^2/2m$ which ensures energy conservation. However, in the current situation, energy can also come from the time-dependent magnetic force. Indeed, if we would apply a single RF π pulse at phase $\phi_{RF} = 0$, the time-averaged velocity would change by $\hbar k_0/m$, but the RF resonance frequency would be independent of velocity and k_0 . However, if a series of RF pulses is used, as in (Fig.1), the resonance is Doppler shifted and becomes velocity selective. This can be seen by regarding the pulses as Ramsey pulses, and considering the phase evolution of the wavefunction between two pulses. The RF pulses create a superposition of spin up and spin down. Between pulses, the phase evolution for spin up/down is solely determined by the kinetic energy $\alpha_{\uparrow\downarrow} = \frac{1}{\hbar} \int (mv_{\uparrow\downarrow}^2/2) dt$, leading to a phase difference $\delta\alpha = \frac{1}{\hbar} (m(\langle v_{\uparrow} \rangle - \langle v_{\downarrow} \rangle) v_{RF}) T = kv_{RF} T$ after one period of shaking, where $v_{RF} = (v_{\uparrow} + v_{\downarrow})/2$ is the common velocity at the moment of RF pulse. With $\langle v_{\downarrow} \rangle = v_{RF} - \hbar k/2m$ we find that for resonant excitation, the RF frequency has to compensate for this phase shift by the Doppler detuning $k\langle v_{\downarrow} \rangle$ and the recoil shift $(\hbar k)^2/2m$ (see Supplement for more details).

Periodic Hamiltonians are formally treated by Floquet theory [2, 3, 10–12], which provides an expression for an effective Hamiltonian \hat{H}_{eff} describing the slow time evolution of the system averaged over the fast micromotion with period T . However, in the standard treatment the effective Hamiltonian is not unique and may depend on the initial time when the periodic drive is switched on. We adopt the approach of reference [2] where the evolution of the quantum system with periodic drive is expressed by an effective Hamiltonian independent of ini-

tial and final times t_i, t_f and a kick (micromotion) operator \hat{K} , which describes the initial kick due to a sudden switch on and the subsequent micromotion, shown as $\hat{U}(t_f, t_i) = e^{-i\hat{K}(t_f)} e^{-i\hat{H}_{eff}(t_f - t_i)} e^{i\hat{K}(t_i)}$.

For our scheme, the time-dependent Hamiltonian of the system in the frame rotating with the RF drive after the rotating-wave approximation is

$$\hat{H} = \frac{\hat{p}_z^2}{2m} + \hbar k_0 \hat{z} \frac{\pi}{T} \sin(2\pi t/T + \phi_{RF}) \hat{\sigma}_z - \frac{1}{2} \hbar \delta_{RF} \hat{\sigma}_z + \hbar \Omega \hat{\sigma}_x T \sum_n \delta(t - nT), \quad (1)$$

where δ_{RF} is the RF detuning with respect to the atomic resonant frequency and m is the atomic mass. The short RF pulses are represented as a series of delta-functions with effective Rabi frequency Ω .

Through the derivation shown in the Supplement [13], we obtain an explicit expression for the effective Hamiltonian and the kick operator defined above

$$\hat{H}_{eff} = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{\hat{p}_z^2}{2m} + \frac{1}{16} \frac{\hbar^2 k_0^2}{m} - \frac{\hbar \delta_{RF}}{2} & \hbar \Omega e^{-ik_0 \cos \phi_{RF} \cdot z} \\ \hbar \Omega e^{ik_0 \cos \phi_{RF} \cdot z} & \frac{\hat{p}_z^2}{2m} + \frac{1}{16} \frac{\hbar^2 k_0^2}{m} + \frac{\hbar \delta_{RF}}{2} \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\hat{K}(t) = -ik_0 \hat{z} \cos\left(\frac{2\pi}{T} t + \phi_{RF}\right). \quad (2)$$

The effective Hamiltonian is identical to the one for a two level atom driven by a photon field at frequency ω_{RF} and with wavevector k , which confirms our discussion above about recoil momentum and Doppler shift. The term $\hbar^2 k_0^2/16m$ is the kinetic energy due to micromotion.

We implemented this scheme using a thermal cloud of approximately 1×10^5 ^{23}Na atoms at 380 nK in a crossed optical dipole trap with trapping frequencies $(\omega_x, \omega_y, \omega_z) = 2\pi \times (98, 94, 25)$ Hz corresponding to Gaussian radii of 19.5 μm , 20 μm and 68 μm respectively. The $|m_F = -1\rangle$ and $|m_F = 0\rangle$ states of the $F = 1$ hyperfine manifold of the atoms were used to form a pseudospin-1/2 system, which will be referred to as $|\uparrow\rangle$ and $|\downarrow\rangle$ states, respectively. The $|m_F = 1\rangle$ state was decoupled from this 2-level system through the quadratic Zeeman effect at a bias field of 11.4 Gauss. Since there is no micromotion in the “non-magnetic” $|m_F = 0\rangle$ state, the maximum momentum transfer $\hbar k_0$ is reduced by a factor of two compared to the discussion above.

The oscillating magnetic force was created by a time-dependent 3D quadrupole field. Along the bias field direction z , this provides a 1D periodic force. Orthogonal to the bias field, the periodic potential is quadratic — there is no net force, only a (negligible) modulation of the confinement. The amplitude of the magnetic field gradient was 48 G/cm at a frequency of 5 kHz, implying a recoil $k_0 = 0.07k_L$ where $\hbar k_L$ is the recoil of the resonant transition at 589 nm, with a recoil velocity $\frac{\hbar k_L}{m} = 2.9$ cm/s.

To resolve Doppler shifts of 200 Hz, sub-milliGauss stability was needed. Any asymmetry of the periodic magnetic field gradient leads to a time-averaged DC field gradient resulting in an inhomogeneous Zeeman shift which had to be suppressed at the 100 Hz level. Finally, the applied magnetic fields were modified by eddy currents in the stainless steel chamber, which had to be accounted for (see Supplement).

The goal of the experimental demonstration was to show that the RF transition is now Doppler sensitive due to the recoil transfer. The spinflip transitions were driven by 4 μ s long RF pulses at 8 MHz with a Rabi frequency of 10 kHz resulting in approximately $\pi/12$ pulses and an average Rabi frequency of $\Omega = 200$ Hz which is defined as the Rabi frequency of the pulse times the duty cycle. Since it was not possible to switch off the shaking coils on micro-second time scales, the RF pulses had to be applied with the magnetic shaking present, which required several steps of spatial and temporal alignments (See Supplement).

The RF pulses and the shaking were applied while the atoms were trapped to ensure that the velocity distribution is independent of position. In time-of-flight (TOF), this is no longer the case, and any residual Zeeman shift gradients could lead to velocity selection. To avoid broadening of the Doppler selected velocity groups by the trapping potential, the total interrogation was chosen to be 1.6 ms, much shorter than the trap period along the z direction. This time is also comparable to the coherence time due to the ambient magnetic field stability. Based on these considerations, we applied a pulse sequence of 2 ms consisting of 10 magnetic shaking cycles with 9 RF pulses across them.

The temperature of the cloud was chosen to be high enough that the Doppler width of 3 kHz (FWHM) was larger than our spectral resolution, mainly Fourier limited to 625 Hz by the 1.6 ms pulse sequence. Due to the Doppler shift, different detunings of the RF selected different velocity groups which were observed in ballistic expansion (Fig. 2). The width of the observed spin flipped slices is almost completely determined by the original spatial size of the cloud since the expansion time of $\tau = 12$ ms was only twice the inverse of ω_z . The TOF was limited by signal-to-noise, given the constraints discussed above. Fortunately, even for small TOF, the displacement of the center of the spinflipped atoms is exactly $v\tau$, which could be accurately measured as a function of RF detuning, as shown in Fig. 3. The observed Doppler shift is in agreement with the theoretical treatment above and confirms that RF photons have been Floquet engineered to have recoil of $k = 0.07k_L$.

The dependence of the recoil on the RF phase was demonstrated by shifting the RF phase from 0 to π (Fig. 3(b)). The Doppler shift and therefore the direction of the recoil changed sign. This observation confirmed that the selection of slices in Fig. 2 is not due to time-averaged

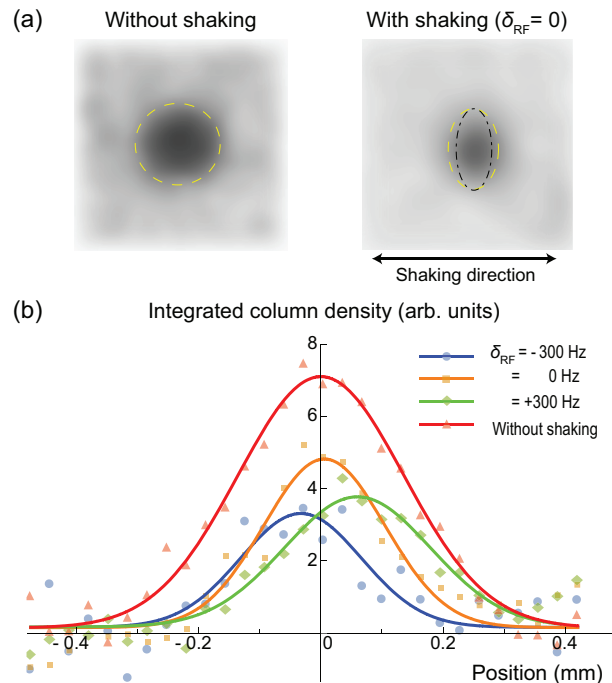


FIG. 2. Observation of velocity selective RF transitions. (a) Absorption images of the spin-flipped atoms (i.e. in the $|m_F = -1\rangle$ state) after 12 ms of TOF with and without magnetic shaking. The yellow dashed ellipses have major and minor axes obtained as FWHM of Gaussian fits. After TOF, the thermal cloud expands by a factor of 2.13, thus a single-velocity class is narrower than the thermal cloud by $1/2.13 \approx 0.47$. The Fourier limit of our velocity selection increases this to 0.50, and inclusion of eddy currents further modifies it to 0.45 (dashed-dotted line). The field of view is 1 mm by 1 mm. (b) Integrated column density distribution obtained from absorption images like those in (a), for different detunings of the RF frequency. The solid lines are Gaussian fits to the data points. The RF phase was at $\phi_{RF} = 0$ to maximize Doppler sensitivity. The asymmetry between the ± 300 Hz is most likely caused by bias field drifts (estimated in Fig. 3 to be 70 Hz) or small residual magnetic field gradients.

magnetic field gradients, which don't depend on the RF phase. We couldn't experimentally explore $\phi_{RF} = \pi/2$, since this would have required to pulse on the RF at the maximum field gradient which would have caused large spatially dependent detunings.

Our scheme can be used to implement one-dimensional spin-orbit coupling of ultracold atoms with magnetic forces and without lasers. The Hamiltonian (Eq. 3) which we have implemented is, by a unitary transformation, equivalent to a Hamiltonian with spin-dependent gauge fields [4],

$$\hat{H}_{SOC} = \frac{1}{2m}(\hat{p}_z - \frac{1}{2}A\hat{\sigma}_z)^2 + \hbar\Omega\hat{\sigma}_x - \frac{\hbar\delta_{RF}}{2}\hat{\sigma}_z. \quad (3)$$

We note that reference [14] obtains the same Hamiltonian

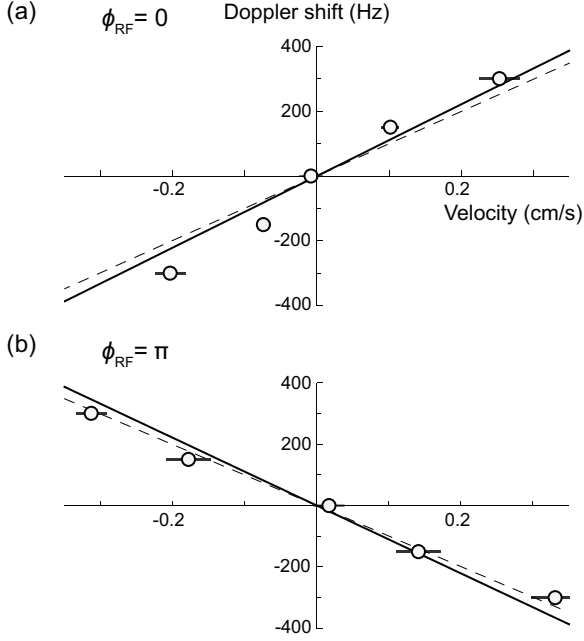


FIG. 3. Observation of RF transitions with Doppler shifts. (a) & (b) Central velocities of the spin-flipped atomic distribution (as in Fig. 2(b)) are shown as a function of RF detuning for $\phi_{RF} = 0$ and $\phi_{RF} = \pi$, respectively. Shifting the RF phase changes the sign of the Doppler shift and therefore the direction of the recoil momentum. The solid line represents the predicted Doppler shifts based on the calibration of recoil momentum. The dashed line takes into account the effects of eddy currents (see Supplement). The error bars are purely statistical based on five data points and correspond to one standard deviation. The inferred one-sigma fluctuations for the frequency are 70 Hz.

as stroboscopic Floquet Hamiltonian. The gauge field $A = \hbar k_0 \cos \phi_{RF}$ is equal to the recoil momentum transfer $\hbar k$ which depends on the RF phase ϕ_{RF} . Previous experimental studies claimed the realization of spin-orbit coupling and gauge fields purely by magnetic shaking, without RF transitions [8, 15]. These claims are ambiguous based on our discussion here: without RF coupling, the momentum transfer and the gauge field are not defined and can be transformed away with a gauge transformation. According to Eqs. (1) and (3), pure magnetic shaking leads only to a kick operator for the micromotion, and the effective Hamiltonian is the free particle Hamiltonian. Therefore, all observations in Refs. [8, 15] are related to an initial kick and micromotion and not to a modified effective Hamiltonian.

In the presence of gauge fields, there are two momenta: the mechanical or kinetic momentum ($p_z \pm \frac{1}{2}A$), and the canonical momentum $p_z = m v_{RF}$. In our scheme, they can both be directly observed and have a very transparent meaning: the kinetic momenta are the time-averaged momenta $m\langle v_{\uparrow} \rangle$, $m\langle v_{\downarrow} \rangle$. The canonical momentum is the instantaneous momentum during the RF pulse (see Sup-

plement).

Our demonstration of RF dressed photons was done with a modest recoil k_0 of $0.07 k_L$ due to technical limitations (see Supplement). The recoil could have been increased by using a glass cell, miniature coils, or atomic chips for which twelve times larger magnetic field gradients have been assumed [6]. Given the small value of k_0 , we didn't look for recoil effects in Bose-Einstein condensates, as in [16], and rather focused on Doppler shifts in thermal clouds.

Dressed-photon recoil has several features different from optical photon recoil: The maximum recoil of a dressed photon is only technically limited, and can be tuned via the strength of the magnetic gradient and in principle also via the RF phase, whereas the recoil in a two-photon transition can be tuned via the angle between the two laser beams. Heating for optical recoil transfer is independent of momentum transfer and depends on the Rabi frequency, whereas the reverse applies to the magnetic scheme.

As in any Floquet schemes, micromotion can lead to heating when the associated kinetic energy is transferred to the secular motion by elastic collisions between the two spin states (which is equivalent to transitions between Floquet states of different quasi-energies). In reference [17], we describe various cases (high and low temperature limit, bosons, and fermions) and conclude that the energy transfer can be expressed by $\dot{E} \propto \rho \sigma v_{\text{col}} E_0$, where v_{col} reflects an effective density of states. For Bose-Einstein condensates, $v_{\text{col}} = \sqrt{\hbar \omega / m}$ for large modulation frequencies ω , implemented in our experiments, and $v_{\text{col}} = \hbar k_0 / m$ in the semi-classical regime. Here ρ is the density, σ is the two-body s -wave scattering cross section. For a sodium condensate with two spin components and density $\rho \sim 10^{14} \text{ cm}^{-3}$, we observed a condensate lifetime of $\sim 8 \text{ s}$ at $k_0 = 0.05 k_L$ consistent with weak Floquet heating [17]. If the momentum transfer k_0 is scaled up to k_L , losses increase proportional to the second or third power of k_0 , depending on the regime [17]. For momentum transfers of k_L , lifetimes larger than 100 ms will require low density clouds on the order of $\sim 10^{12} \text{ cm}^{-3}$ or small scattering lengths. For degenerate Fermi gases with $E_F \gg \hbar \omega$, heating is Pauli suppressed by a factor of $(\hbar \omega / E_F)^2$.

There are possible extensions of generating magnetic recoil. One is to use the TOP trap configuration [18] where a constant gradient is combined with a rotating bias field in the x - y plane which creates a rotating force. A sequence of RF pulses generates “dressed photons” with recoil k along the $\cos \phi_{RF} \mathbf{e}_x + \sin \phi_{RF} \mathbf{e}_y$ direction. The RF phase now controls the direction of the recoil. The concept of dressed RF photons should be useful for a more general class of quantum simulations. For instance, it applies to spin-dependent forces created by the vector AC Stark shift. Using focused laser beams or lattices to create spin-dependent potentials, the effective recoil

is spatially localized, and can easily be time-modulated. In comparison to magnetic field gradients, the forces due to the vector AC Stark shift can be larger, and much faster modulation frequencies are possible. Using optical spin-dependent forces instead of magnetic forces may eliminate several limitations of our scheme, especially for atoms like cesium and rubidium, where large spin-dependent optical forces can be realized without major heating by spontaneous scattering.

In conclusion, we demonstrated how magnetic shaking can be used to endow an RF photon with large and tunable recoil. This scheme illustrates many aspects of Floquet engineering, including heating in both quantum and classical limit. This technique is a building block for quantum simulations including spin-dependent gauge fields and measurements such as Doppler velocimetry. It can be applied to any atom or molecule with non-zero spin in the ground state, and is independent of the structure of electronically excited states.

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