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Anomalous current-voltage characteristics of SFIFS Josephson junctions with weak ferromagnetic interlayers

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Abstract

We present a quantitative study of the current-voltage characteristics (CVC) of SFIFS Josephson

junctions (S denotes bulk superconductor, F - metallic ferromagnet, I - insulating barrier) with

weak ferromagnetic interlayers in the diffusive limit. The problem is solved in the framework of

the nonlinear Usadel equations. We consider the case of a strong tunnel barrier such that the left

SF and the right FS bilayers are decoupled. We calculate the density of states (DOS) in SF bilay-

ers using a self-consistent numerical method. Then we obtain the CVC of corresponding SFIFS

junctions, and discuss their properties for different set of parameters including the thicknesses of

ferromagnetic layers, the exchange field, and the magnetic scattering time. We observe the anoma-

25 lous nonmonotonic CVC behavior in case of weak ferromagnetic interlayers, which we ascribe by
26 DOS energy dependencies in case of small exchange fields in F layers.

27 **Keywords**

28 Current-voltage characteristics, Josephson junctions, proximity effect, superconductivity, Super-
29 conductor/Ferromagnet hybrid nanostructures

30 **Introduction**

31 It is well known that superconductivity and ferromagnetism are two competing antagonistic or-
32 ders. In superconductors (S) electrons form Cooper pairs with opposite spins and momenta, while
33 in ferromagnetic metals (F) electron spins tend to align in parallel. Nevertheless, it is possible to
34 combine in one hybrid structure the S and F layers, which leads to observation of many striking
35 phenomena. The reason is the superconducting proximity effect, i.e. the superconducting correla-
36 tions leakage into a ferromagnetic metal due to the Andreev reflection processes. [1-7] As a conse-
37 quence, the real part of the pair wave function performs the damped oscillatory behavior in a fer-
38 romagnetic metal. Hence, since the oscillations are spatially dependent, it is possible to realize a
39 transition from “0” to “ π ” phase state in S/F/S structures upon changing the F layer thickness.[1]
40 The proximity effect is characterized by two length scales of decay and oscillations of the real part
41 of the pair wave function in a ferromagnetic layer, ξ_{f1} and ξ_{f2} , correspondingly.[1] If we consider
42 the exchange field h as the only important parameter of a ferromagnetic material, both lengths are
43 equal to $\xi_h = \sqrt{D_f/h}$, where D_f is the diffusion constant in the ferromagnetic metal.

44 The existence of such phenomena makes possible the creation of so-called Josephson π junc-
45 tions with a negative critical current.[1,2] Oscillations of the pair wave function in the F layer
46 leads to several interesting phenomena in S/F/(S) systems, including nonmonotonic critical
47 temperature dependence,[8-12] Josephson critical current oscillations,[13-41] and density of
48 states (DOS) oscillations.[42-45] S/F hybrid structures have many promising applications in sin-
49 gle flux quantum (SFQ) circuits,[46,47] spintronic devices,[48] like memory elements[49-58]

50 and spin-valves,[59-65] magnetoelectronics,[66-68] qubits,[69] artificial neural networks,[70]
 51 microrefrigerators,[71,72] low-temperature sensitive electron thermometers,[73] etc.
 52 However, S/F/S junctions and other metallic junctions (for example, SFNFS), proposed as elements
 53 of novel superconducting nanoelectronics, exhibit very small resistances and therefore are not quite
 54 suitable for those applications, where active Josephson junctions are required.[74,75] This problem
 55 can be solved by addition of an insulating interlayer (I) in such structures, which offers the freedom
 56 to tune the critical current density over a wide range and at the same time realize high values of the
 57 $I_c R_n$ product, where I_c is the critical current of the junction and R_n - its normal state resistance.[36-
 58 38] Recently, SIFS junctions attracted much attention and have been intensively studied stud-
 59 ied both experimentally [32-41] and theoretically.[23,45,76-80] For instance, the current-voltage
 60 characteristics (CVC) of SIFS Josephson junctions with strong insulating layer were studied in
 61 Ref. [45]. They exhibit interesting nonmonotonic behavior for weak ferromagnetic interlayers, i.e.
 62 small enough exchange fields. The reason for this behavior is the shape of the density of states in
 63 the F layer. At small exchange fields the decay length of superconducting correlations in ferromag-
 64 netic material, $\sim \xi_h$ is large enough, which leads to profound variations of the superconducting
 65 density of states in the F layer over energy and results in corresponding CVC behavior. With in-
 66 crease of the exchange field the ξ_h decreases, which suppresses the superconducting correlations in
 67 the F layer and makes the SIFS CVC similar to the I-V curve of the FIS junction.
 68 In this paper we study the current-voltage characteristics of SFIFS Josephson junctions with two
 69 ferromagnetic interlayers. SFIFS structures were also proposed for various applications in mem-
 70 ory elements,[56-58] single flux quantum (SFQ) circuits,[47] and as injectors in superconductor-
 71 ferromagnetic transistors (SFT),[81-84] which can be used as amplifiers for memory, digital, and
 72 RF applications. In this work we study the current-voltage characteristics of a SFIFS junction,
 73 shown in Fig. 1. We present quantitative model of the quasiparticle current in SFIFS junctions for
 74 different set of parameters characterizing the ferromagnetic interlayers. In case of weak ferromag-
 75 netic metals we find the anomalous nonmonotonic shape of the current-voltage characteristics at
 76 subgap voltages and compare the results with CVC of SIFS junctions.[45] We ascribe this behavior

77 by DOS energy dependencies in case of small exchange fields in F layers. This shape is smeared
 78 if we include finite magnetic scattering rate. The anomalous nonmonotonic shape of the current-
 79 voltage characteristics of SFIFS junctions with weak ferromagnetic layers looks similar to the fine
 80 structures of quasiparticle currents, recently obtained experimentally on similar systems.[82-85]
 81 The paper organized as follows. In the first section (Model) we formulate the theoretical model
 82 and basic equations and introduce the self-consistent numerical iterative method for calculating the
 83 density of states (DOS) in S/F bilayers. In the next section (Results and discussion) we present and
 84 discuss the results for the density of states in S/F bilayers in case of subgap values of the exchange
 85 field and the current-voltage characteristics of SFIFS junctions. Finally we summarize the results
 86 in the last section (Conclusion).

87 Model

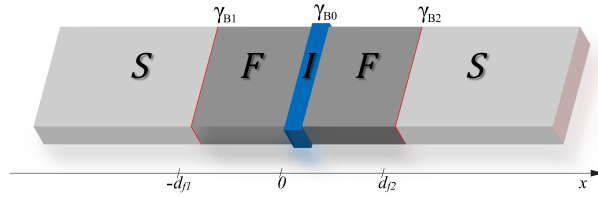


Figure 1: Schematic representation of SFIFS hybrid structure (here S is a superconductor, F is a ferromagnetic metal and I is an insulating barrier). The thicknesses of the ferromagnetic interlayers are d_{f1} and d_{f2} , correspondingly. The transparency of the left S/F interface is characterized by γ_{B1} parameter, while the transparency of the right F/S interface is characterized by γ_{B1} parameter. Both parameters $\gamma_{B1}, \gamma_{B1} \ll 1$, which corresponds to transparent metallic interfaces. The insulating barrier between the left and right interfaces (I) is described by $\gamma_{B0} \gg 1$.

88 In this section we present the theoretical model we use in our studies. The geometry of the con-
 89 sidered system is depicted in Fig. 1. It consists of two superconducting electrodes and couple of
 90 ferromagnetic interlayers, with thicknesses d_{f1} and d_{f2} , correspondingly. The system contains
 91 three interfaces: two S/F (superconductor/ferromagnet) boundaries and one tunnel F-I-F interface.
 92 Each of these interfaces is described by the dimensionless parameter $\gamma_{Bj} = R_{Bj}\sigma_n/\xi_n$ ($j = 0, 1, 2$),
 93 which is proportional to the resistance R_{Bj} across the interface.[86-88] Here σ_n is the conductiv-
 94 ity of the F layer and $\xi_n = \sqrt{D_f/2\pi T_c}$ is the coherence length, where T_c is the critical temperature

95 of the superconductor S (here and below we assume $\hbar = k_B = 1$). In this paper we consider the
 96 diffusive limit, when the elastic scattering length ℓ is much smaller than the decay characteristic
 97 length of the real part of the pair wave function in the ferromagnet, ξ_{f1} [which we introduce later
 98 in Eqs. (12)]. We assume that the S/F interfaces are not magnetically active. We also neglect the
 99 nonequilibrium effects,[89-91] and use the Matsubara Green's functions technique, which has been
 100 developed to describe many-body systems in equilibrium at finite temperature.[92]
 101 In our model the tunneling barrier is located between two F layers at $x = 0$ (Fig. 1), whereas other
 102 interfaces at $x = -d_{f1}$ and $x = d_{f2}$ are identical and transparent. This case corresponds to $\gamma_{B1} =$
 103 $\gamma_{B2} \ll 1$ and $\gamma_{B0} \gg 1$. In case of strong enough tunnel barrier ($\gamma_{B0} \gg 1$), two S/F bilayers in the
 104 SFIFS junction are decoupled, i.e. the amplitudes of two-electron processes between left and right
 105 F layers are negligibly small. Hence, the quasiparticle current through the SFIFS junction, biased
 106 by the voltage eV , can be calculated by using the Werthamer formula,[93]

$$107 \quad I = \frac{1}{eR} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} dE N_{f1}(E - eV) N_{f2}(E) [f(E - eV) - f(E)], \quad (1)$$

108 where $N_{f1,2}(E)$ is the density of states (DOS) in the corresponding ferromagnetic layer at $x = 0$,
 109 $f(E) = [1 + e^{E/T}]^{-1}$ is the Fermi-Dirac distribution function, and $R = R_{B0}$ is the resistance across
 110 the F-I-F interface. Both densities of states $N_{f1,2}(E)$ are normalized to their values in the normal
 111 state.

112 In order to obtain the densities of states in ferromagnetic layers, $N_{f1,2}(E)$, we use a self-consistent
 113 two-step iterative procedure, described below. As far as $\gamma_{B0} \gg 1$, we can neglect the influence of
 114 right F layer on the density of states in the left S/F bilayer and vice versa (see Fig. 1). Thus we
 115 need to obtain the DOS at the outer border of each S/F bilayer. That can be done by solving the
 116 Usadel equations in S/F bilayer system.[94]

117 In the following, we use the θ -parameterizations of normal ($G = \cos \theta$) and anomalous ($F = \sin \theta$)

118 Green's functions and write the Usadel equations in F layers in the form,[94,95]

$$\begin{aligned}
 119 \quad \frac{D_f}{2} \frac{\partial^2 \theta_{f\uparrow(\downarrow)}}{\partial x^2} &= \left(\omega \pm ih + \frac{1}{\tau_z} \cos \theta_{f\uparrow(\downarrow)} \right) \sin \theta_{f\uparrow(\downarrow)} \\
 120 \quad &+ \frac{1}{\tau_x} \sin(\theta_{f\uparrow} + \theta_{f\downarrow}) \pm \frac{1}{\tau_{so}} \sin(\theta_{f\uparrow} - \theta_{f\downarrow}), \\
 121 \quad &
 \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

122 where the positive and negative signs correspond to the spin-up (“↑”) and spin-down (“↓”) states,
 123 respectively. In terms of the electron fermionic operators $\psi_{\uparrow(\downarrow)}$ the spin-up state corresponds to the
 124 anomalous Green's function $F_{\uparrow} \sim \langle \psi_{\uparrow} \psi_{\downarrow} \rangle$, while spin-down state corresponds to $F_{\downarrow} \sim \langle \psi_{\downarrow} \psi_{\uparrow} \rangle$. The
 125 $\omega = 2\pi T(n + \frac{1}{2})$ are the Matsubara frequencies, where $n = 0, \pm 1, \pm 2, \dots$, and h is the exchange
 126 field in the ferromagnet. The scattering times are labeled here as τ_z , τ_x , and τ_{so} , where $\tau_{z(x)}$ corre-
 127 sponds to the magnetic scattering parallel (perpendicular) to the quantization axis, and τ_{so} is the
 128 spin-orbit scattering time.[96-99]

129 Assuming strong uniaxial anisotropy in ferromagnetic materials, in which case there is no coupling
 130 between spin-up and spin-down electron populations, we neglect τ_x ($\tau_x^{-1} \sim 0$). Moreover we also
 131 assume the ferromagnets with weak spin-orbit coupling and thus neglect spin-orbit scattering time
 132 τ_{so} . After taking into account all the assumptions mentioned above the Usadel equations in the fer-
 133 romagnetic layers for different spin states can be written as

$$134 \quad \frac{D_f}{2} \frac{\partial^2 \theta_{f\uparrow(\downarrow)}}{\partial x^2} = \left(\omega \pm ih + \frac{\cos \theta_{f\uparrow(\downarrow)}}{\tau_m} \right) \sin \theta_{f\uparrow(\downarrow)}, \tag{3}$$

135 where $\tau_m \equiv \tau_z$ is the magnetic scattering time. In the superconducting layer S the Usadel equation
 136 read[94]

$$137 \quad \frac{D_s}{2} \frac{\partial^2 \theta_s}{\partial x^2} = \omega \sin \theta_s - \Delta(x) \cos \theta_s. \tag{4}$$

138 Here D_s is the diffusion coefficient in the S layer and $\Delta(x)$ is the pair potential in the superconduc-
 139 tor. We note that $\Delta(x)$ vanishes in the F layer.

140 Eqs. (3) and (4) must be supplemented with corresponding boundary conditions. At the S/F inter-

141 faces we apply the Kupriyanov-Lukichev boundary conditions. For example, at the left S/F inter-
 142 face they are written as,[86]

$$143 \quad \xi_n \gamma \left(\frac{\partial \theta_f}{\partial x} \right)_{-d_{f1}} = \xi_s \left(\frac{\partial \theta_s}{\partial x} \right)_{-d_{f1}}, \quad (5a)$$

$$144 \quad \xi_n \gamma_{B1} \left(\frac{\partial \theta_f}{\partial x} \right)_{-d_{f1}} = \sin(\theta_s - \theta_f)_{-d_{f1}}. \quad (5b)$$

145

146 Similar equations can be written at the right S/F interface at $x = d_{f2}$. Here $\gamma = \xi_s \sigma_n / \xi_n \sigma_s$, where
 147 σ_s is the conductivity of the S layer and $\xi_s = \sqrt{D_s / 2\pi T_c}$ is the superconducting coherence length.
 148 The parameter γ defines the strength of the inverse proximity effect, i.e. suppression of supercon-
 149 ductivity in the adjacent S layer by the ferromagnetic layer F. We consider the parameter γ to be
 150 relatively small $\gamma \ll 1$, which corresponds to rather weak suppression.

151 To calculate the density of states in the S/F bilayer we should set the boundary conditions at the
 152 outer boundary of the ferromagnet ($x = 0$),

$$153 \quad \left(\frac{\partial \theta_f}{\partial x} \right)_0 = 0. \quad (6)$$

154 To complete the boundary problem we also set a boundary condition at $x = \pm\infty$,

$$155 \quad \theta_s(\pm\infty) = \arctan \frac{\Delta}{\omega}, \quad (7)$$

156 where the Green's functions acquire the well-known bulk BCS form. We notice that the density of
 157 states at $x = \pm\infty$ is given by standard BCS equation,

$$158 \quad N_s(E) = \text{Re} [\cos \theta_s(i\omega \rightarrow E + i0)] = \frac{|E| \Theta(|E| - \Delta)}{\sqrt{E^2 - \Delta^2}}, \quad (8)$$

159 where $\Theta(x)$ is the Heaviside step function.

160 Finally the self-consistency equation for the superconducting order parameter takes the form,

$$161 \quad \Delta(x) \ln \frac{T_c}{T} = \pi T \sum_{\omega > 0} \left(\frac{2\Delta(x)}{\omega} - \sin \theta_{s\uparrow} - \sin \theta_{s\downarrow} \right). \quad (9)$$

162 The equations (3)-(7) and Eq. (9) represent a closed set of equations that should be solved self-
163 consistently.

164 The density of states $N_{f1,2}(E)$ normalized to the DOS in the normal state, can be written as

$$165 \quad N_{fj}(E) = [N_{fj\uparrow}(E) + N_{fj\downarrow}(E)] / 2, \quad j = 1, 2, \quad (10)$$

166 where $N_{fj\uparrow(\downarrow)}(E)$ are the spin resolved densities of states written in terms of the spectral angle θ ,

$$167 \quad N_{fj\uparrow(\downarrow)}(E) = \text{Re} [\cos \theta_{fj\uparrow(\downarrow)}(i\omega \rightarrow E + i0)], \quad j = 1, 2. \quad (11)$$

168 To obtain $N_{f1,2}$, we use a self-consistent two-step iterative procedure.[95,100-102] In the first step
169 we calculate the pair potential coordinate dependence $\Delta(x)$ using the self-consistency equation in
170 the S layer, Eq. (9). Then, by proceeding to the analytical continuation in Eqs. (3), (4) over the
171 quasiparticle energy $i\omega \rightarrow E + i0$ and using the $\Delta(x)$ dependence obtained in the previous step,
172 we find the Green's functions by repeating the iterations until convergency is reached.

173 The characteristic lengths of the decay and oscillations of the real part of the pair wave function in
174 the ferromagnetic layer at the Fermi energy, $\xi_{f1,2}$, are given in our model by,[45]

$$175 \quad \frac{1}{\xi_{f1}} = \frac{1}{D_f} \sqrt{\sqrt{h^2 + \frac{1}{\tau_m^2}} + \frac{1}{\tau_m}}, \quad (12a)$$

$$176 \quad \frac{1}{\xi_{f2}} = \frac{1}{D_f} \sqrt{\sqrt{h^2 + \frac{1}{\tau_m^2}} - \frac{1}{\tau_m}}. \quad (12b)$$

177

178 We see from these equations that with increase of the magnetic scattering rate $\alpha_m = 1/\tau_m\Delta$ the

179 length of decay ξ_{f1} decreases, while the length of oscillations ξ_{f2} increases. In the absence of
 180 magnetic scattering $\xi_{f1} = \xi_{f2} = \xi_h = \sqrt{D_f/h}$.

181 Results and Discussion

182 In this section we present the results of the DOS energy dependencies in SF bilayers at free bound-
 183 ary of the F layer for $h \lesssim \Delta$. The densities of states for $h \gtrsim \Delta$ were thoroughly discussed in
 184 Ref. [45]. Then we calculate corresponding CVC of the SFIFS junction using the Werthamer for-
 185 mula, Eq. (1). In case of $h \lesssim \Delta$ we obtain interesting nonmonotonic behavior of the quasiparticle
 186 current, presented in subsection below (Current-voltage characteristics of SFIFS junctions). At
 187 large exchange fields the decay length ξ_{f2} of the real part of the pair wave function in the F layer
 188 became small [see Eqs. (12)] and the amplitude of DOS variations tends to zero. In this case the
 189 CVC of SFIFS junction tends to Ohm's law for $h \gg \Delta$. The ferromagnetic materials with small ex-
 190 change fields can be fabricated as discussed in Ref. [103]. We also note that the DOS at the end of
 191 an SF bilayer in case of the domain wall in the ferromagnetic layer was studied in Ref. [104].

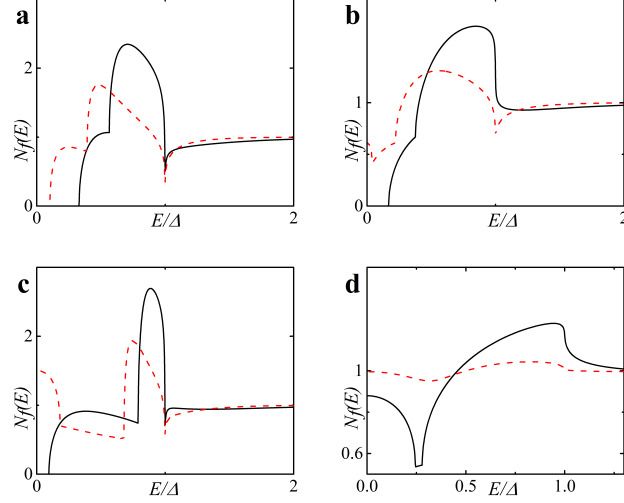


Figure 2: DOS $N_f(E)$ on the free boundary of the F layer in the FS bilayer obtained numerically for two cases: (a) in the absence of magnetic scattering, $\alpha_m = 1/\tau_m\Delta = 0$ (plots a and c) and in case of finite magnetic scattering - plot b ($\alpha_m = 0.1$) and plot d ($\alpha_m = 0.5$). Parameters of the FS interface are $\gamma = \gamma_B = 0.01$, and $T = 0.1T_c$. Plots a-b: $h = 0.1\Delta$; plots c-d: $h = 0.3\Delta$. Black solid line corresponds to $d_f = 2\xi_n$, while red dashed line to $d_f = 3\xi_n$.

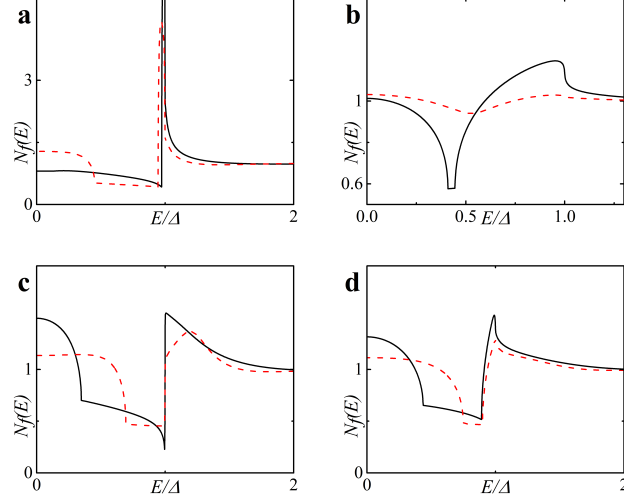


Figure 3: DOS $N_f(E)$ on the free boundary of the F layer in the FS bilayer obtained numerically in the absence of magnetic scattering, $\alpha_m = 1/\tau_m\Delta = 0$ (plots a and c) and in case of finite magnetic scattering - plot d ($\alpha_m = 0.1$) and plot b ($\alpha_m = 0.5$). Plots a-b: $h = 0.5\Delta$; plots c-d: $h = 0.7\Delta$. Black solid line corresponds to $d_f = 2\xi_n$, while red dashed line to $d_f = 3\xi_n$.

192 Density of states in SF bilayers for $h \lesssim \Delta$

193 Figures 2 and 3 show the DOS energy dependencies for different $h \lesssim \Delta$ and for relatively thick F
 194 layers. In our calculations we fix the temperature at $T = 0.1T_c$, where T_c is the critical tempera-
 195 ture of the superconductor S. In Fig. 2 the characteristic “finger-like” shape of DOS is observed
 196 along with a minigap for $d_f = 2\xi_n$ [Fig. 2 (a) and (c)]. At larger d_f as and/or at larger h the mini-
 197 gap closes [Fig. 2 (c) and Fig. 3 (a, c)]. In the absence of magnetic scattering ($\alpha_m = 1/\tau_m\Delta = 0$) we
 198 can roughly estimate the critical value h_c of the exchange field at which the minigap closes as[45]

$$199 \quad h_c \sim E_{Th}, \quad E_{Th} = D_f/d_f^2, \quad (13)$$

200 where E_{Th} is the Thouless energy and d_f is the thickness of the F layer in the SF bilayer [d_{f1} or d_{f2}
 201 for the left or right SF bilayer in Fig. 1]. Since we consider subgap values of h , the minigap closes
 202 at rather large d_f in the absence of magnetic scattering.

203 After the minigap closes the DOS at the Fermi energy $N_f(0)$ rapidly increases to values larger than
 204 unity with further increase of d_f and then it oscillates around unity while its absolute value ex-
 205 ponentially approaches unity.[45] This is the well-known damped oscillatory behavior with the

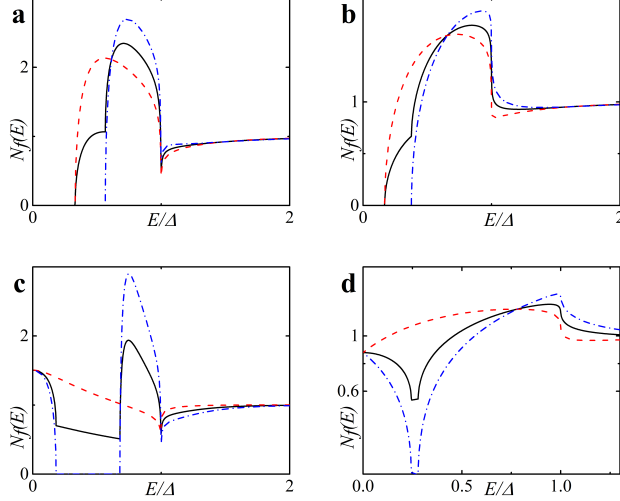


Figure 4: Spin resolved DOS $N_{f\uparrow(\downarrow)}$ on the free boundary of the F layer in the FS bilayer calculated numerically in the absence of magnetic scattering, $\alpha_m = 0$ (plots a and c) and in case of finite magnetic scattering - plot b ($\alpha_m = 0.1$) and plot d ($\alpha_m = 0.5$). Plots a-b: $h = 0.5\Delta$, $d_f = 2\xi_n$; plots c-d: $h = 0.3\Delta$, $d_f = 3\xi_n$ (c) and $d_f = 2\xi_n$ (d). Black solid line corresponds to $N_f(E)$, red dashed line to $N_{f\uparrow}(E)$ and blue dash-dotted line to $N_{f\downarrow}(E)$.

206 lengths of decay and oscillations given by Eqs. (12), correspondingly. Figures 2 (b, d) and 3 (b,
 207 d) show that stronger magnetic scattering leads to the minigap closing at smaller d_f . With the in-
 208 crease of $\alpha_m = 1/\tau_m\Delta$ the period of oscillations increases [ξ_{f2} in Eqs. (12) increases]. At the same
 209 time the DOS variation amplitude became smaller and DOS features smear, since for larger α_m the
 210 dumped exponential decay of oscillations occurs faster [ξ_{f1} in Eqs. (12) decreases].
 211 Finally, we present plots for spin-resolved densities of states given by Eqs. (11) in Fig. 4 for both
 212 zero and finite magnetic scattering.

213 Current-voltage characteristics of SFIFS junctions

214 Using the densities of states $N_{f1,2}(E)$ obtained in subsection above, we calculate a set of quasipar-
 215 ticle current curves using Eq. (1) for various values of parameters describing properties of ferro-
 216 magnetic material, which include F layer thicknesses d_{f1} and d_{f2} , exchange field h , and magnetic
 217 scattering rate α_m . In our calculations we fix the temperature at $T = 0, 1T_c$, where T_c is the critical
 218 temperature of the superconducting lead.

219 Fig. 5 demonstrates the CVC of a symmetric SFIFS junction, where $d_{f1} = d_{f2} = d_f$ in the ab-

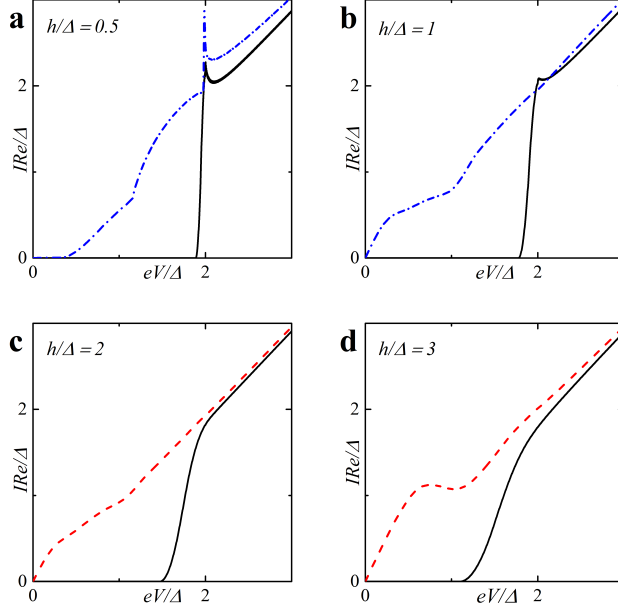


Figure 5: Current-voltage characteristics of the symmetric ($d_{f1} = d_{f2} = d_f$) SFIFS junction in the absence of magnetic scattering for different values of exchange field h . The temperature $T = 0.1T_c$. In each graph the curves were calculated for different values of F layer thickness d_f , $d_f = 0.5\xi_n$ (black solid line), $d_f = 1.0\xi_n$ (red dashed line), $d_f = 1.5\xi_n$ (blue dash-dotted line).

220 sence of magnetic scattering. For thin enough ferromagnetic interlayers, $d_f/\xi_n = 0.5$, and small
 221 enough value of the exchange field, $h = 0.5\Delta$, we observe the CVC which resemble the I-V charac-
 222 teristic of a SNINS Josephson junction with a characteristic peak at $eV \approx 2\Delta$ [see Fig. 5 (a), solid
 223 black line].[101] With increase of the exchange field h this peak is smeared [see Fig. 5 (b), (c) and
 224 (d), solid black line]. Increasing the d_f and/or h produce a set of I-V curves, among which the red
 225 dashed line in Fig. 5 (d) is the most interesting, since it performs a nonmonotonic behavior. The
 226 reason of a typical nonmonotonic behavior will be explained later.

227 Fig. 6 shows the current-voltage characteristics of SFIFS junctions at subgap values of the ex-
 228 change field. We observe a nonmonotonic behavior for thick enough ferromagnetic layers at $h \lesssim \Delta$.
 229 Let us consider the CVC in Fig. 6 (b), red dashed line. We can explain its behavior as well as any
 230 other nonmonotonic CVC behavior as the signature of the DOS energy dependence. The anoma-
 231 lous nonmonotonic $I(V)$ dependence arises from the shape features of the densities of states, see
 232 Fig. 7. In symmetric SFIFS junctions, $N_{f1}(E) = N_{f2}(E) \equiv N_f(E)$ in Eq. (1), which can be well
 233 approximated by taking $T = 0$ for small temperatures $T \ll T_c$. In this case the Fermi-Dirac dis-

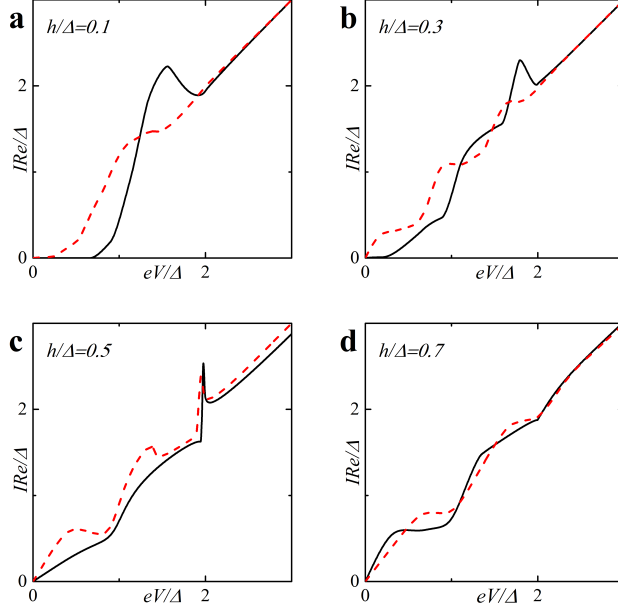


Figure 6: Current-voltage characteristics of a symmetric SFIFS junction for different values of subgap exchange field h in the absence of magnetic scattering. The temperature $T = 0.1T_c$. In each graph the curves were calculated for different values of F layer thickness d_f , $d_f = 2\xi_n$ (black solid line) and $d_f = 3\xi_n$ (red dashed line).

234 tribution function $f(E)$ can be represented as the Heaviside step function $\Theta(-E)$ [and $f(E - eV)$
 235 as $\Theta(eV - E)$]. As a result, the limits of integration in (1) shrink to the interval $[0, eV]$. Hence, the
 236 current through the junction can be written as,

$$237 \quad I = \frac{1}{eR} \int_0^{eV} dE N_f(E - eV) N_f(E). \quad (14)$$

238 Using this expression, the origin of nonmonotonic behavior of the CVC can be explained. At
 239 $eV = 0$ the upper limit of the integral in Eq. (14) is zero and the current is zero. With the increase
 240 of the voltage, the current first increases linearly due to broader region of integration as in Ohm's
 241 law. The first feature which is shown on Fig. 7 (a) is a significant change in the slope of the cur-
 242 rent. Fig. 7 (b) shows relative positions of the densities of states $N_f(E - eV)$ and $N_f(E)$ in this
 243 case, where almost no peak overlap can be seen, resulting in relatively small value of the inte-
 244 gral in Eq. (14). As we proceed to larger values of eV , we reach the first local maximum of the
 245 CVC which corresponds to maximum overlap of the densities of states $N_f(E - eV)$ and $N_f(E)$ at

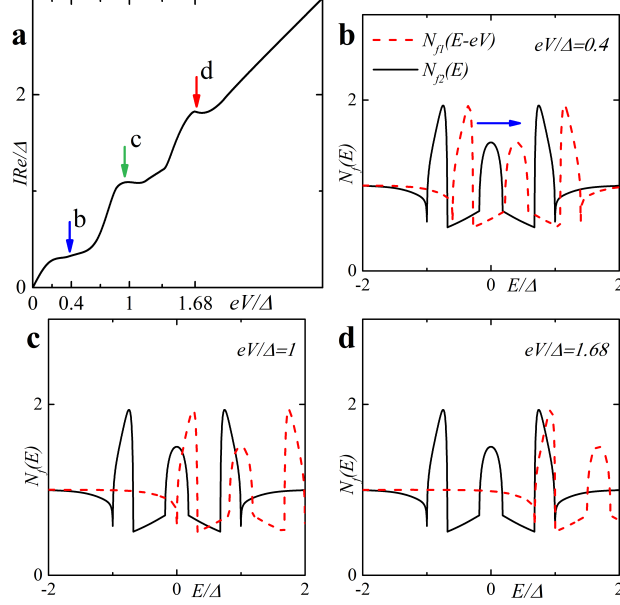


Figure 7: The CVC taken from Fig. 6 (b), red dashed line, and visual explanation of the characteristic behavior of the quasiparticle current (a). Plots (b)-(d) show the DOS $N_f(E - eV)$ and $N_f(E)$ at particular value of eV revealing the origin of the current features in plot (a).

246 $eV/\Delta \approx 1$ [see Fig. 7 (c)]. The second maximum of the quasiparticle current occurs at $eV/\Delta \approx 1.68$
 247 that corresponds to perfect DOS peak overlap at $E/\Delta \approx 1$ [Fig. 7 (d)]. For large enough values
 248 of voltage eV , a product of the DOS $N_f(E - eV)N_f(E) \approx 1$ and its integration does not produce
 249 any features. Thus, the CVC eventually coincides with Ohm's law in this case. In fact any shape
 250 of a SFIFS I-V curve can be explained and understood in this way. We note that in this paper we
 251 present the densities of states in SF bilayers only for subgap values of the exchange field. For $h \gtrsim \Delta$
 252 the DOS energy dependencies in SF bilayers can be found, for example, in Ref. [45].
 253 Based on the properties of the density of states in FS bilayers we can see that even the tiny ex-
 254 change field h can modify the current dramatically introducing anomalous nonmonotonic behavior
 255 in case of thick enough F layers [see Figs. 5, 6]. It is important then to understand how the CVC of
 256 a SFIFS junction transforms as the exchange field h increases. In Fig. 8 we demonstrate the plot of
 257 current-voltage characteristics calculated for a wide range of exchange field values h in the absence
 258 of magnetic scattering. From this plot it can be clearly seen that while for relatively small (sub-
 259 gap) values of the exchange field many interesting features appear in the structure of the current,
 260 at larger values of h these features are smeared and CVC tends to the Ohm's law. Figure 9 shows

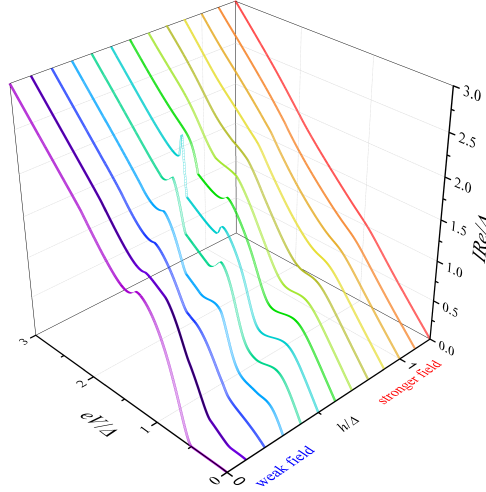


Figure 8: Current-voltage characteristics of a symmetric SFIFS junction in the absence of magnetic scattering for $d_f = 3\xi_n$. The temperature $T = 0.1T_c$. The curves correspond to different values of h , from $h = 0\Delta$ to $h = 1.2\Delta$ with increment equal to 0.1Δ . The exchange field $h = 0$ corresponds to the case of a SNINS junction.[101]

261 the current-voltage characteristics in case of an asymmetric SFIFS junction, i.e. when $d_{f1} \neq d_{f2}$ in
 262 case of zero magnetic scattering.

263 In this section we also present the current-voltage characteristics of a SFIFS junction calculated
 264 in the presence of magnetic scattering for different values of the subgap exchange field h . Fig. 10
 265 illustrates the CVC in case of finite magnetic scattering rate $\alpha_m = 0.1$. We consider both symmet-
 266 ric and asymmetric SFIFS junctions. The insets show the CVC in case of zero magnetic scattering.
 267 For tiny h nonzero magnetic scattering leads to smearing of characteristic features of the current as
 268 shown in Fig. 10. At larger subgap values of the exchange field h we see a “triple kink” structure,
 269 see Fig. 10 (c). For large enough values of α_m the nonmonotonic behavior of the quasiparticle cur-
 270 rent will be smeared and the current tends to the Ohm’s law. This is due to the fact that increasing
 271 α_m the length of the superconducting correlations decay in the ferromagnetic layers decreases, see
 272 Eqs. (12), and the suppression of superconducting correlations in the F layers occurs faster.

273 We can compare these results with the I-V characteristics of SIFS Josephson junctions.[45] In this
 274 case at zero magnetic scattering we may also observe the nonmonotonic behavior, but with only
 275 one peak [see Ref. [45], Fig. 6 (c)]. In case of finite magnetic scattering the CVC has a “double
 276 kink” structure [see Ref. [45], Fig. 7 (a, c)]. In SFIFS junctions the overlap of subgap DOS struc-

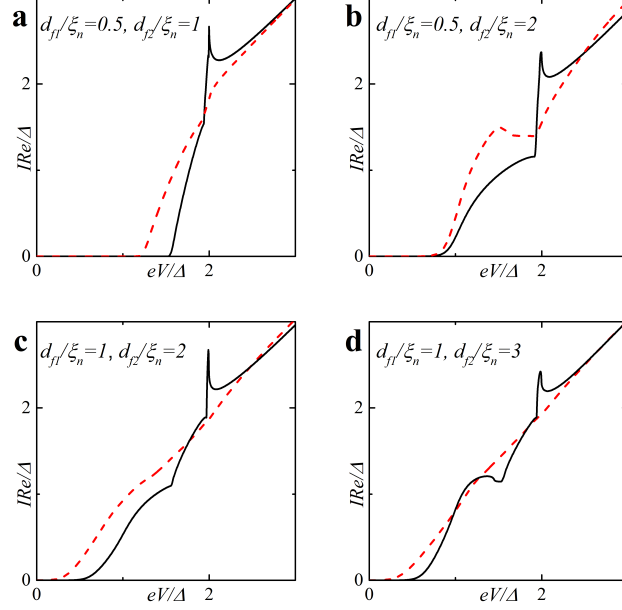


Figure 9: Current-voltage characteristics of an asymmetric ($d_{f1} \neq d_{f2}$) SFIFS junction for different values of F layer thicknesses d_{f1} and d_{f2} (indicated in the plot) in the absence of magnetic scattering. The temperature $T = 0.1T_c$, $h = 0.5\Delta$ (black solid line) and $h = 1.0\Delta$ (red dashed line).

277 tures $N_{f1}(E - eV)N_{f2}(E)$ in the integrand of the current equation, Eq. (14), produce more complex
 278 behavior of the I-V characteristics.

279 We also notice that in recent experiments on SFIFS junctions as injectors of superconductor-
 280 ferromagnetic transistors (SFT) some fine structures of the subgap quasiparticle current was
 281 observed,[82-85] which looks similar to our theoretical results.

282 Conclusion

283 In this work we have presented the results of CVC calculations of a SFIFS junction for different set
 284 of parameters including the thicknesses of ferromagnetic layers d_{f1}, d_{f2} , the exchange field, and
 285 the magnetic scattering time $\alpha_m = 1/\tau_m\Delta$. We considered the case of a strong insulating barrier
 286 such that the left SF and the right FS bilayers are decoupled. In order to obtain the current-voltage
 287 characteristics we first calculated the densities of states (DOS) on the free boundary of the F layer
 288 in each SF bilayer utilizing the iterative self-consistent approach. Using the numerically calculated
 289 DOS we have derived the quasiparticle current of a SFIFS junction in the case of symmetric ($d_{f1} =$
 290 d_{f2}) and asymmetric ($d_{f1} \neq d_{f2}$) structures. We have paid much attention to the case of SFIFS

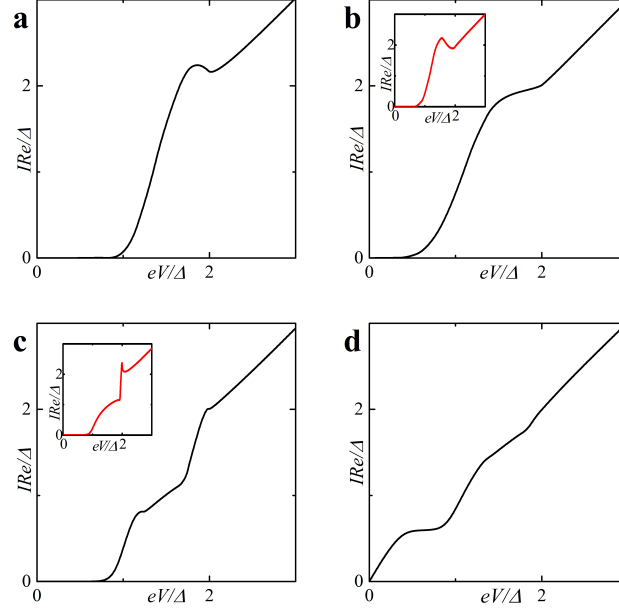


Figure 10: Current-voltage characteristics of a SFIFS junction in the presence of magnetic scattering ($\alpha_m = 0.1$). The temperature $T = 0.1T_c$. In the plot (a) black solid line corresponds to $d_{f1} = 1\xi_n, d_{f2} = 2\xi_n$, in the plots (b) and (d) to $d_{f1} = d_{f2} = 2\xi_n$ and finally in the plot (c) black line corresponds to $d_{f1} = 0.5\xi_n, d_{f2} = 2\xi_n$. Plots (a)-(b): $h = 0.1\Delta$; plots (c) and (d): $h = 0.5\Delta$ and $h = 0.7\Delta$, respectively. The insets show the CVC in case of zero magnetic scattering.

291 junction with weak ferromagnetic interlayers with exchange fields $h \lesssim \Delta$. It was demonstrated that
 292 the CVC possess interesting and unusual features in this case, which can be ascribed by typical
 293 DOS behavior. We have provided simple physical explanation of the CVC with such anomalous
 294 behavior. We have also illustrated how the CVC shape evolves as one increases the exchange field
 295 h introducing. It should be emphasized that taking into account finite magnetic scattering leads to
 296 the smearing of characteristic features and in particular cases leads to a “triple kink” shape of the
 297 current.

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