

Studying the Venus terminator thermal structure observed by SOIR/VEx with a 1D radiative transfer model

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Abstract

The SOIR instrument on board Venus Express routinely measures the CO₂ number density profiles in the mesosphere and thermosphere region at the Venus terminator using the solar occultation technique. Assuming the hydrostatic equilibrium, we derive temperature profiles, which show a permanent cold layer at 125 km, surrounded by two warmer layers at 100 km and 140 km. We developed a 1D conductive radiative transfer model to study the mean SOIR thermal profile, considering the main species, and carefully modelling the radiative terms. In order to correctly reproduce the thermal profile, aerosols cooling and heating terms are added. We describe how aerosols number density profiles can be calculated to have a good match of the thermal profiles.

1. Introduction

SOIR is an infrared spectrometer that probes the Venus terminator region since 2006. measurements are taken on the morning and evening sides of the terminator, covering all latitudes from the North Pole to the South Pole. The covered wavelength range - 2.2 to 4.3 µm - allows a detailed chemical inventory of the Venus atmosphere [1-6]; vertical profiles of CO₂, CO, H₂O, HCl, HF, SO₂ and aerosols are regularly inferred. CO2 is detected from 70 km up to 165 km, CO from 70 km to 140 km, and the minor species typically below 110 km down to 70 km. Number density profiles of these species are computed from the measured spectra. N2 and O are also considered in the model, but are not measured by SOIR. For N₂, we assume 3.5% of the total density, while O is taken as in [7]. The mean profiles are presented in Figure 1.

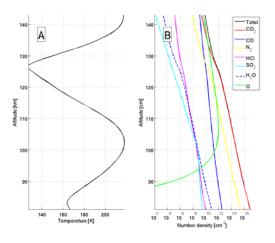


Figure 1: Panel A, mean SOIR temperature profile; Panel B: mean number SOIR number density profiles

Temperature profiles are obtained while computing the spectral inversion of the CO₂ spectra combined with the hydrostatic law [8], see Figure 1. The time variability of the CO₂ density profiles spans over two orders of magnitude, and a clear trend is seen with latitude. The temperature variations are also important, of the order of 35 K for a given pressure level, but the latitude variation are small.

2. The radiative model

A 1D radiative transfer model has been developed to reproduce the SOIR terminator profiles, derived from the Mars thermosphere code presented in [9]. This model has been expanded to better account for the CO₂, CO, and O non-LTE radiative heating and cooling processes which have to be considered in the dense atmosphere of Venus. Radiative cooling by minor species detected by SOIR (e.g. HCl, SO₂, and H₂O) are found to be small in comparison to the

 $15 \mu m CO_2$ cooling. Aerosol cooling in the 60-90 km altitude range may be important to reach the thermal balance. The radiative terms are plotted in Figure 2.

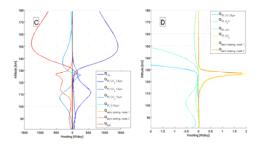


Figure 2: Radiative terms at steady state for which the model temperature best matches the SOIR mean profile. The profiles are separated in two panels as a function of their magnitude.

There is a good agreement between the 1D model temperature profile and the mean SOIR temperature profile. Further we can suggest parameters that can be adjusted to improve the agreement between model and measurements. The remaining differences can be attributed to the atmosphere dynamics at the terminator.

3. Summary and Conclusions

We developed a 1D radiative transfer model to study the thermal profiles at the Venus terminator. We considered the main species present in the Venus mesosphere and thermosphere, together with the aerosols. Aerosols need to be added to cool the mesosphere and to correctly fit the SOIR mean temperature profile.

Acknowledgements

Venus Express is a planetary mission from the European Space Agency (ESA). This research program was supported by the Belgian Federal Science Policy Office and the European Space Agency (ESA PRODEX program). The authors also recognize the support from the FP7 EuroVenus project (G.A. 606798). This work was partially funded with a Court séjour grant of the Belgian Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique and by the Lunar and Planetary Laboratory of the University of Arizona. The author would like to thank the FNRS for the Chargé de Recherche position.

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