Turbulent CO₂ flux measurements by lidar: length scales, results and comparison with in-situ sensors

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1. Introduction

A mechanistic understanding of the global carbon cycle requires quantification of terrestrial ecosystem CO₂ fluxes over regional scales. Different attempts, i.e. “top-down” or “bottom-up” methods, to infer CO₂ fluxes from the small (0.1 – 1 km) to larger scales (10 – 1000 km) need experimental verification and instrumentation to do so. Range resolved CO₂ flux measurements will help significantly our understanding of the vertical transport of CO₂ at, firstly, the ABL – free troposphere interface. Indeed the entrainment zone is usually not reached by the tall towers and such data are inexistent. Particular interest is in the morning and evening transition, but also night time vertical transport. Secondly, the biosphere – ABL interface can be studied. While the results here are from a ground-based experiment, an airborne lidar would be powerful instrument to address the issue of CO₂ surface flux variability at different scales linked to the stratification of the atmosphere and the spatial heterogeneity of the surface (structure of the canopy).

Lidar has the ability to make direct range resolved flux measurements using an eddy-covariance method. Previous measurements of the flux of a scalar in the atmospheric boundary layer (ABL) have already been reported with latent flux using a combination of ground-based 1 or airborne 2 Doppler and DIAL lidars. Two micrometer Differential Absorption Lidar (DIAL) systems for CO₂ mixing ratio measurements have already been developed at the NASA Langley Research Center and at the Institut Pierre Simon Laplace, Laboratoire de Météorologie Dynamique. 3,5 They demonstrated a good precision of ~ 1 % with rather large time (~ 30 min) and space resolution (~ 1 km) though. These former Doppler lidars use heterodyne detection which also provides radial velocity measurements. Using this double ability, i.e. concentration and velocity measurements, we present here a preliminary study of CO₂ flux measurements by lidar using the eddy-covariance method. Rather than a geophysical study of CO₂ flux in the ABL, the goal of this paper is to present the requirements for the design of a dedicated future ground-based or airborne Doppler DIAL system for accurate CO₂ flux measurements.

Section 2 describes the experimental site in Wisconsin, the NASA Doppler DIAL and in-situ sensors. Section 3 shows details of lidar CO₂ flux calculations. Taking advantage of a useful synergy between in-situ and lidar instruments, section 4 presents the characteristics of night and daytime turbulent CO₂ and velocity fluctuations in the whole ABL. Section 5 shows a preliminary comparison of CO₂ fluxes calculated using the eddy-covariance method and in-situ and lidar data.

2. Study site and instrumentation

The field experiment took place in June 23, 2007 at the WLEF tall tower site in the Chequamegon National Forest in northern Wisconsin (45.95°N, 90.27°W, 472 m above sea level) (Fig. 1). The region is a heavily forested zone of low relief. The tower is a 447 m tall television transmitter. Two minute mean CO₂ mixing ratios are sampled at six levels (11, 30, 76, 122, 244, and 396 m) by two infrared gas analyzers (IRGA) (LiCor Model Li-6251) to give CO₂ profiles. Turbulent winds, virtual potential temperature and H₂O mixing ratio are also measured by three sonic anemometers and other IRGAs at 30, 122 and 396 m above the ground. A ground based meteorological station provides also others observations such as net radiation and surface pressure, temperature and moisture.
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To infer a CO₂ flux estimate using the eddy-covariance method we need (as for in-situ data) high frequency measurements of CO₂ and velocities. We are looking for a correlation between the fluctuations of CO₂ mixing ratio and vertical velocities due to turbulence only. The CO₂ EC flux is given by:

\[ F_{\text{CO}_2} = \langle w \rangle \cdot \rho_{\text{CO}_2} \]  

where \( \langle \cdot \rangle \) and \( \rho_{\text{CO}_2} \) are respectively for the vertical and time resolution of lidar CO₂ and velocities measurements.

Signal averaging can be used to decrease the instrumental error on flux measurements as long as the final time and space resolution of the lidar fits within the time and space integral scale of CO₂ turbulent flux. Otherwise, biases on lidar flux measurements may occur.

4. Space and time integral scales of turbulence

In this section, we investigate the turbulence characteristics of in-situ and lidar observations using covariance techniques. The autocovariance (ACV) is used to separate signal variance due to space correlated atmospheric processes from uncorrelated instrumental noise. For the atmospheric variable \( c(x) \):

\[ \text{ACV}_c(X) = \langle c(x) c(x+X) \rangle \]  

where \( c(x) = c + c'(x) \) with \( c'(x) \) is for the space-dependent fluctuation and \( X \) the space lag represents the mean in the range gate used to calculate the autocovariance.

For lidar measurements, Eq. (2) becomes:

\[ \text{ACV}_c(X) = \langle c(x) c(x+X) \rangle \]  

Knowing that \( \text{ACV}_c(0) = \sigma_{c,\text{lat}}^2 + \sigma_{c,\text{atm}}^2 \) and using a Fourier transform to determine \( \sigma_{c,\text{lat}}^2 \) and \( \sigma_{c,\text{atm}}^2 \), we can measure \( \sigma_{c,\text{lat}}^2 \). Then, we can define the autocorrelation function (ACR) by:

\[ \text{ACR}_c(X) = \frac{\text{ACV}_c(X)}{\sigma_{c,\text{atm}}^2} \]  

The integral of this function is called the integral scale (IS). The first maximum of this integral is usually chosen to be the IS. \(^\text{1,7,8}\) The IS is related to the dominant eddy size and enables us to determine the space and time scales of turbulence.
5. Results and validation with in-situ sensors

Figure 3 displays a synoptic view of the three days of measurements June 14-16, 2007. Lidar measurements (first range gate at 150 m) concern the residual layer during the night and the convective boundary layer (CBL) during the day. 06/14 and 06/16 days are characterized by weak wind speed conditions with \( V < 5 \) m.s\(^{-1}\) whereas June 15 is particularly windy with \( V \approx 10 \) m.s\(^{-1}\). The three CBLs are characterized by cumulus clouds and large entrainment zones (especially for June 14 and 15). The June 15 night is disturbed by a strong nocturnal jet with \( V > 10 \) m.s\(^{-1}\).
Downward slanting structures in the aerosol profile lead us to suspect additional significant subsidence motion during June 14 night. During June 16 night, a thunderstorm gave some rain around 3 h.

Figure 4b shows CO$_2$ eddy-covariance flux measurements inferred from the in-situ sensors at 396 m and the 2-µm Doppler DIAL. The mean flux lidar measurements are estimated in a temporal and vertical range gate of ~ 6 h and 1500 m (from 300 m to 1800 m), respectively. The lidar flux results displayed in Figure 14b are calculated from different time and space resolution of CO$_2$ mixing ratio and vertical velocity estimates, 150 m - 80 s (dots) and 300 m - 160 s (squares) in order to reduce as much as possible the statistical error on CO$_2$ mixing ratio measurements. The flux measurements are corrected from the bias due to parasitic H$_2$O absorption. During the daytime, although large statistical errors exist, lidar CO$_2$ flux estimates are negative like the in-situ measurements. A CO$_2$ uptake by the vegetation creates a sink in the surface layer, corresponding to a negative CO$_2$ flux at the bottom of the CBL. In addition, NOAA airborne measurements around the WLEF site (46.00±0.05°N, 90.17±0.03°W) report a free troposphere CO$_2$ mixing ratio of 384.5 ± 0.4 ppm from 2200 m up to 3900 m on June, 11, 2007. Therefore, the free troposphere represents a source of CO$_2$ for the ABL and we expect a negative flux of CO$_2$ at the top of the CBL. A mean ABL negative eddy-covariance CO$_2$ flux during the daytime is thus expected and verified with the measurements. During the night time, lidar flux measurements are in agreement with the in-situ measurements within the error bars. The increase of CO$_2$ for the different levels below 244 m shows the build-up of CO$_2$ in the nocturnal layer due to a positive CO$_2$ surface flux linked to the vegetation respiration. At the top of the residual layer, because of larger free tropospheric CO$_2$ mixing ratio than in the residual layer, entrainment flux is expected to be negative. These considerations explain the in-situ negative CO$_2$ flux measured during 06/15 and 06/16 nights, both due to intrusion of free tropospheric air in the residual layer.

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References


