Chapter

3.5

Page 1

Alright everyone, welcome back to Phys 608, Laser Spectroscopy. Today, we embark on a very important topic, which forms Chapter 3.5 of our discussion: Homogeneous and Inhomogeneous Line Broadening. This is a fundamental concept in all forms of spectroscopy, but it takes on particular significance in laser spectroscopy, where the high resolution capabilities of lasers often push us to understand the ultimate limits of spectral features. Understanding what causes a spectral line to have a certain width, and the nature of that width, is absolutely crucial for interpreting experimental results and for designing sophisticated spectroscopic techniques.

As noted, these materials have been prepared by Distinguished Professor Doctor M A Gondal for our course here at KFUPM. Let's dive in.

Page 2

So, to begin, let's outline the scope and learning goals for this section on line broadening. This first slide sets the agenda.

Our primary objective, as stated in the first bullet point, is to: **Introduce the two fundamental categories of spectral-line broadening: homogeneous versus inhomogeneous.** This distinction is paramount. It's not just a semantic difference; it reflects fundamentally different physical origins and has profound implications for how we can interact with and manipulate these spectral lines using lasers. Homogeneous broadening implies that every atom or molecule in our ensemble contributes in essentially the same way to the line shape. Think of it as an intrinsic property of each individual quantum system under the prevailing conditions. In contrast, inhomogeneous broadening arises when different atoms or molecules, or different sub-groups within our ensemble, have slightly different resonant frequencies. The observed line shape is then a composite, an envelope of many individual, narrower lines. We'll unpack this in great detail.

The second goal is to: **Build an intuitive and quantitative understanding of how each mechanism modifies the observable frequency distribution of photons emitted or absorbed by atoms or molecules.** So, it’s not enough to just name these categories. We need to understand the physics *behind* them. What are the actual processes occurring at the atomic or molecular level that lead to a spread of frequencies rather than an infinitely sharp δ function? We'll look at things like finite lifetimes of states, collisions between particles, and the thermal motion of particles. And we'll develop the mathematical formalisms – the line shape functions – that describe these distributions quantitatively. This will allow us to connect theory with what we actually measure in the lab.

Page 3:

Continuing with our learning goals for this chapter: A crucial aspect will be to: **Develop the mathematical tools—especially the Lorentzian line shape and the Maxwell-Boltzmann Doppler profile—that let us predict and fit experimental spectra.** Spectroscopy is an experimental science, and a key part of it is fitting observed spectral features to theoretical models. The Lorentzian profile is the hallmark of homogeneous broadening, and we will derive its form and understand its parameters. The Gaussian profile, arising from the Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution of velocities in Doppler broadening, is the classic example of an inhomogeneous lineshape. Mastering these functions, understanding where they come from, and knowing how to use them is essential for any practicing spectroscopist.

Next, we will: **Examine the role of collisions, differentiating between...** and here we have three sub-types that are critically important to distinguish:

First, **amplitude-perturbing (inelastic) collisions.** These are collisions where there's an actual exchange of energy. For example, an excited atom might collide with another atom and lose its excitation energy, or transition to a different state. This directly affects the lifetime of the excited state and, as we'll see, contributes to homogeneous broadening by shortening the duration of the coherent emission or absorption process.

Second, **phase-perturbing (elastic) collisions.** In these collisions, the internal energy state of the atom or molecule doesn't change, but the phase of its quantum mechanical wave function, which describes its oscillating dipole, is randomly interrupted or shifted. Think of an atom happily emitting a wave, and then a collision comes along and abruptly changes the phase of that wave. This, too, leads to a broadening of the spectral line, and it's also a homogeneous effect. The atom itself is still the same, but its radiative process has been "kicked."

And third, **velocity-changing collisions that redistribute molecular velocities.** These are also elastic in the sense that they conserve the internal energy of the colliding partners, but they change the kinetic energy, specifically the velocity vector of the particle we are interested in. As we'll see, this is particularly important when we consider Doppler broadening, as it can move an atom from one velocity subgroup to another, effectively changing its resonant frequency as seen by the laser. This has implications for the overall observed line shape and for certain advanced spectroscopic techniques.

Page 4:

And finally, the capstone learning goal for this section is to: **Connect these ideas to practical laser-spectroscopy techniques.** We're not just learning abstract concepts here. We want to see how understanding homogeneous and inhomogeneous broadening allows us to understand, and indeed to develop, powerful laser spectroscopy methods.

We'll talk about different regimes:

Doppler-limited spectroscopy: This is what you often encounter in simple absorption or emission experiments with gases at room temperature. The observed linewidth is primarily determined by Doppler broadening.

Doppler-free spectroscopy: This is where the magic of laser spectroscopy really shines. Techniques like saturation spectroscopy, two-photon spectroscopy, and others have been developed specifically to circumvent the Doppler broadening and reveal the underlying, much narrower, homogeneous linewidth. This is how we achieve ultra-high resolution.

And **Dicke-narrowed regimes:** This is a fascinating phenomenon where, under certain conditions, collisions, which we usually think of as broadening a line, can actually *narrow* the Doppler profile. This occurs when the mean free path of the atoms becomes smaller than the wavelength of the radiation.

So, that's our roadmap for this chapter. It’s a rich and crucial set of topics.

Page 5:

Alright, let's start with the very basics. This page asks the fundamental question: **What Exactly Is a "Spectral Line"?** This might seem trivial, but a precise definition is important.

Under the heading **Core Concept**, we have the definition: **A spectral line is the distribution of detected photon frequencies associated with a quantum transition** E_i to E_k in an ensemble of identical particles.

Let's break this down.

First, "distribution of detected photon frequencies." This means a spectral line is not, in general, a single, infinitely sharp frequency. If we sit there with a detector and count photons emitted or absorbed by our sample, we'll find that they span a range of frequencies. The spectral line *is* that plot of how many photons we get at each frequency, or the probability of detecting a photon at a given frequency.

Second, "associated with a quantum transition E_{i} to E_{k}." Spectroscopy fundamentally probes transitions between quantum states. E_{i} is the energy of the initial state, and E_{k} is the energy of the final state. The nominal, or central, frequency of the transition is given by the Bohr condition: $\nu = \frac{E_{\mathrm{k}} - E_{\mathrm{i}}}{h}$, or $\omega = \frac{E_{\mathrm{k}} - E_{\mathrm{i}}}{\hbar}$.

Third, "in an ensemble of identical particles." We are almost always dealing with a vast number of atoms or molecules – an ensemble. And critically, even if these particles are "identical" in terms of their species (e.g., all hydrogen atoms), various factors can cause them to interact with light at slightly different frequencies, or for the transition in each to have a finite frequency width. This is the origin of line broadening.

Now, let's formalize this with the **Formal Probability Density**:

The slide shows: $P_{ik}(\omega)\, d\omega$ is equivalent to the probability that a randomly chosen particle emits or absorbs a photon with angular frequency in the range ω to $\omega + d\omega$.

So, $P_{ik}(\omega)$ is our line shape function. It's a probability density. When you multiply it by an infinitesimal frequency interval $d\omega$, you get the actual probability. The subscript "ik" reminds us that this is for a specific transition from state i to state k. The fact that it's a function of ω, the angular frequency, tells us that there's a spread. If there were no broadening, $P_{ik}(\omega)$ would be a Dirac delta function centered at ω_0, the Bohr frequency. But in reality, it's a function with a finite width. Our goal in this chapter is to understand the shapes of $P_{ik}(\omega)$ that arise from different physical mechanisms.

Page 6:

To ensure we're all on the same page, let's define some **Essential Symbols (with SI Units)** that we'll be using throughout this discussion.

1. E_i — Energy of the initial quantum state. This is measured in Joules, symbol J. This is the energy of the atom or molecule *before* the spectroscopic transition occurs.

2. E_k — Energy of the final quantum state. Also in Joules, J. This is the energy *after* the transition. The difference, $E_\mathrm{k} - E_\mathrm{i}$, determines the energy of the photon involved.

3. $\omega = 2\pi\nu$ — Angular frequency of the photon. This is measured in radians per second, or radians times seconds to the minus one. ω is related to the ordinary frequency ν (in Hertz) by $\omega = 2\pi\nu$. We often use angular frequency in our equations because it simplifies many expressions, particularly when $\hbar$ (the reduced Planck constant) is involved.

4. $P_{ik}(\omega)$ — Normalised probability density. The units here are seconds, or s. This might seem a bit counterintuitive. Why seconds? Well, remember that $P_{ik}(\omega)$, $d\omega$ must be a dimensionless probability. Since $d\omega$ has units of radians per second (and radians are dimensionless), $P_{ik}(\omega)$ must have units of one over frequency, which is time. So, seconds.

Finally, a crucial property of any probability density is its **Normalisation condition**:

$$\int_0^\infty P_{ik}\,(\omega)\,d\omega = 1.$$

This simply means that the probability of the particle emitting or absorbing a photon at *some* frequency within the line profile must be unity, assuming the transition occurs. We are accounting for all possibilities within that spectral line. This normalization is very important when we define specific line shape functions like the Lorentzian or Gaussian; we need to ensure they are properly normalized.

Page 7:

This page provides a simple but essential visualization. At the top, we see an energy level diagram. There are two horizontal lines representing quantum energy states. The upper line is labeled E_{i}, the initial, higher energy state. The lower line is labeled E_{k}, the final, lower energy state. A blue arrow points downwards from E_{i} to E_{k}, indicating an emission process, and it's labeled $\hbar\omega$. This signifies that a photon of energy $\hbar\omega$ is emitted when the system transitions from state E_{i} to state E_{k}. If the arrow were pointing upwards, it would represent absorption of a photon of the same energy.

The energy difference, $E_{\mathrm{i}} - E_{\mathrm{k}}$, is precisely equal to $\hbar\omega_0$, where ω_0 is the central, or resonant, angular frequency of the transition.

Below this energy level diagram, we see a simple graph. The horizontal axis is labeled Frequency (ω). The vertical axis is labeled $P_{ik}(\omega)$, which we just defined as the normalized probability density of the transition.

Now, in an idealized world, if there were absolutely no broadening mechanisms, all photons emitted or absorbed in this E_{i} to E_{k} transition would have exactly the same frequency, ω_0, which is equal to $\frac{E_{\mathrm{i}}-E_{\mathrm{k}}}{\hbar}$. In such an idealized case, the spectral line, $P_{ik}(\omega)$, would be an infinitely sharp spike, a Dirac delta function, centered at ω_0. This is represented on the graph by a single, sharp vertical red line at the position ω_0 on the frequency axis.

This picture is, of course, an oversimplification. In reality, this red line will have some finite width and a characteristic shape, which is precisely what line broadening is all about. The study of these widths and shapes is what we are embarking on. The energy level diagram defines the *center* of the line, $\hbar\omega_0$, while the broadening mechanisms will determine the *spread* of frequencies around this ω_0, giving $P_{ik}(\omega)$ its actual functional form.

Page 8:

Slide 3:

Now we arrive at the first of our two major categories: **Defining Homogeneous Broadening**. This is Slide 3.

The key idea is stated right at the top: **Homogeneous means "the same for every member of the ensemble".** This is the absolute crux of it. In homogeneous broadening, every single atom or molecule in your sample has *identically the same* probability distribution for emitting or absorbing a photon as a function of frequency. There isn't one group of atoms that prefers slightly lower frequencies and another group that prefers slightly higher frequencies. No, every atom is intrinsically broadened in the same way.

Let's look at point 1: **Uniform Transition Probability.** Mathematically, this means that $P_{ik}(\omega)$ is identical for all particles initially in state E_i. So, if you could isolate any single atom from the ensemble and measure its individual line shape (which is conceptually possible, though experimentally challenging for a single atom's spectrum without very specialized techniques), it would look exactly like the line shape of any other atom, and also like the overall macroscopic line shape you observe from the whole ensemble. The macroscopic line is simply the sum of identical individual contributions, scaled by the number of atoms.

Now, point 2: **Typical Physical Origins.** What causes this type of broadening? The first one listed is: **Natural (radiative) lifetime,** τ_{sp}, stems from spontaneous emission. Even an isolated atom, completely undisturbed by anything else, will have a finite linewidth if the excited state E_i can decay via spontaneous emission. Spontaneous emission means the excited state has a finite lifetime, let's call it τ_{sp} (tau subscript s p). The Heisenberg uncertainty principle, in one of its forms, relates the uncertainty in energy (ΔE) and the uncertainty in time (Δt) by

$$\Delta E \Delta t \approx \hbar.$$

If a state has a finite lifetime τ, that lifetime can be considered a Δt. This implies an uncertainty in its energy, ΔE, of about

$$\frac{\hbar}{\tau}.$$

This energy uncertainty translates directly into a frequency uncertainty, or linewidth, $\Delta\omega$, of approximately

$$\frac{1}{\tau}.$$

So, the very fact that an excited state can decay spontaneously means it doesn't have an infinitely sharply defined energy, and thus the transition frequency is not infinitely sharp. This is called natural broadening. It's an intrinsic quantum mechanical property. Every atom capable of spontaneous emission from state E_i will experience this broadening in exactly the same way. Hence, it's a homogeneous mechanism. The characteristic line shape associated with natural broadening is Lorentzian, which we'll discuss shortly.

Page 9:

Continuing with the typical physical origins and characteristics of homogeneous broadening: Another significant cause is **Collision-induced damping when collisions change amplitude or phase without altering particle velocity.** We briefly touched on this in the learning goals. Imagine our atom or molecule is trying to radiate or absorb a photon. This process takes a certain amount of time. If, during this time, the atom collides with another particle (another atom, a molecule, an electron, or even the wall of the container), that collision can interrupt the radiative process.

If the collision is **inelastic** (amplitude-perturbing), it might cause the atom to transition to a different energy level, effectively cutting short the emission or absorption from the original state E_i. This shortening of the effective lifetime of the state, similar to the natural lifetime effect, leads to broadening.

If the collision is **elastic** (phase-perturbing), the atom remains in state E_i, but the phase of its oscillating dipole (which is responsible for interacting with light) gets randomly shifted. Think of it like a tiny radiating antenna whose oscillation is suddenly jolted. Each such jolt truncates a coherent segment of the wave train. The Fourier transform of such an interrupted wave train will be broader than that of an uninterrupted one.

Crucially, for these collisional effects to be considered *purely* homogeneous in this context, we are assuming here that the collision *does not* significantly change the particle's velocity, and therefore doesn't shift its Doppler contribution. If all particles experience these collisional interruptions statistically in the same way, then this type of broadening is also homogeneous. Each particle's individual line shape is broadened, and they are all broadened identically.

Point 3 is the **Key Experimental Signature: Every particle exhibits the same line shape, so the observed macroscopic profile equals the single-particle profile.** This is just restating the core definition from a practical viewpoint. If you measure the spectrum of your entire ensemble, the shape you see (e.g., its width, its functional form like Lorentzian) is the same shape that each individual atom or molecule would show if you could measure it in isolation but under the same conditions (temperature, pressure leading to collisions, etc.). This is a very important distinguishing feature from inhomogeneous broadening, as we'll see.

And finally, point 4: **Mathematical Prototype. The Lorentzian discussed on the next slide.** The characteristic line shape that arises from processes like natural lifetime broadening and many types of collisional broadening (those that interrupt the coherence time) is the Lorentzian profile. So, when you see a Lorentzian line shape in an experiment, it's often a strong indicator that homogeneous broadening mechanisms are dominant, or at least significantly contributing. We'll now delve into the specifics of this Lorentzian shape.

Page 10:

Let's now look at **Slide 4: The Lorentzian Line Shape.** This is the mathematical heart of homogeneous broadening.

The **Statement of the Model** given here is: **For homogeneous broadening caused purely by the finite excited-state lifetime...**

The slide starts with this specific case, natural broadening, as the simplest and most fundamental origin of a Lorentzian profile. However, as we've discussed, certain types of collisional broadening also lead to a Lorentzian. So, the Lorentzian is more general, but its simplest derivation comes from considering the finite lifetime due to spontaneous emission.

The equation for the probability density is given as:

$$P_{ik}(\omega) = A_{ik}\, L(\omega - \omega_0)$$

Let's break this down.

- $P_{ik}(\omega)$ is what we're trying to define: the probability density for a transition between states i and k as a function of angular frequency ω. It has units of seconds.

- A_{ik} is a coefficient we'll define next.

- $L(\omega - \omega_0)$ is the normalized Lorentzian line shape function itself. It's a function of the detuning, $\omega - \omega_0$, where ω_0 is the central resonant frequency of the transition. This L function will give the characteristic "shape" of the line.

Now for the **Components & Definitions:**

1. A_{ik} — Einstein A-coefficient. Its units are s^{-1} (inverse seconds). It represents the **total spontaneous-emission rate** from the initial state i to

the final state k (if k is lower in energy) or, more generally, it's related to the overall decay rate of the coherence between states i and k. If we are considering purely natural broadening, then A_{ik} is indeed the Einstein A coefficient for spontaneous emission from state i to state k. More broadly, if other processes (like inelastic collisions) also depopulate state i, they would contribute to an increased effective decay rate, which would take the role of A_{ik} in determining the overall width.

However, there's a slight nuance here. $P_{ik}(\omega)$ is a *normalized probability density* for the line shape of the i to k transition. The A_{ik} term here, if it's just the Einstein A coefficient, relates to the *rate* of that specific transition. The way $P_{ik}(\omega)$ is written, A_{ik} might be better thought of as a prefactor that ensures the correct relationship if L is normalized in a particular way. Let's see how L is defined on the next page.

It's important to realize that the finite lifetime, one over A_{ik} (or one over the total decay rate of the upper state, γ), is what fundamentally leads to the energy spread and thus the Lorentzian shape due to the uncertainty principle.

Page 11:

Continuing with the components and definitions of the Lorentzian line shape:

2. ω_0 — Central (resonant) angular frequency.

This is given by the familiar Bohr frequency condition:

$$\omega_0 = \frac{E_{\mathrm{k}} - E_{\mathrm{i}}}{\hbar}$$

(or the reduced Planck constant).

Here, we must be careful with the sign convention. If E_{k} is the lower state and E_{i} is the upper state for emission, then $E_{\mathrm{k}} - E_{\mathrm{i}}$ is negative, and ω_0 would be negative. Usually, we define ω_0 as a positive quantity, so it would be the absolute value of $\frac{E_\mathrm{k}-E_\mathrm{i}}{\hbar}$, or $\frac{E_\mathrm{upper}-E_\mathrm{lower}}{\hbar}$. Let's assume ω_0 is the positive angular frequency corresponding to the energy difference between the two levels. It’s the frequency where the transition probability is maximal. Its units are radians per second.

3. $L(\varDelta\omega)$ — Normalised Lorentzian.

And here is the explicit mathematical form of the Lorentzian function:

$$L(\varDelta\omega) = \frac{1}{\pi}\,\frac{\frac{1}{2}\varGamma}{(\varDelta\omega)^2 + \left(\frac{1}{2}\varGamma\right)^2}$$

Let's dissect this very carefully.

* $L(\varDelta\omega)$ is the Lorentzian function. It's a function of $\varDelta\omega$.

* $\varDelta\omega$ is defined in the "where" clause below the equation: $\varDelta\omega \equiv \omega - \omega_0$. This is the detuning – how far the current frequency ω is from the central resonant frequency ω_0. Its units are radians per second.

* $\varGamma$ (uppercase Gamma) is a crucial parameter. It represents the **full width at half maximum (FWHM)** of the Lorentzian profile, in angular frequency units (radians per second). We'll see this more clearly when we look at the graph. This $\varGamma$ is directly related to the lifetime or coherence time of the transition. For natural broadening, $\varGamma$ is equal to A_{ik}, the Einstein A-coefficient for spontaneous emission from the upper state, or more generally, the total decay rate of the population of the excited state, or the decay rate of the coherence between the two states.

* The term $\frac{1}{\pi}$ is a normalization factor. It ensures that if you integrate $L(\varDelta\omega)$ with respect to $\varDelta\omega$ from minus infinity to plus infinity, you get 1. Or, if you integrate with respect to ω from 0 to infinity (assuming the line is far from $\omega = 0$), you also get 1. This makes $L(\varDelta\omega)$ a properly normalized probability density with respect to frequency. The units of $L(\varDelta\omega)$ must be inverse

frequency, i.e., seconds, because $\Delta\omega$ is in rad/s and the integral $P\,d\omega$ needs to be dimensionless. The $\frac{1}{2}\Gamma$ in the numerator has units of rad/s. The denominator $(\Delta\omega)^2 + \left(\frac{1}{2}\Gamma\right)^2$ has units of (rad/s)^2. So the fraction has units of (rad/s)$^{-1}$, or seconds per radian (seconds, as radians are dimensionless). The $\frac{1}{\pi}$ factor is dimensionless. So, $L(\Delta\omega)$ indeed has units of seconds.

Now, let's reconsider the equation from the previous page:

$$P_{ik}(\omega) = A_{ik}\,L(\omega - \omega_0)$$

If L is normalized to integrate to 1 (as this form does), then $P_{ik}(\omega)$, if it is also to be a normalized probability density, should just *be* $L(\omega - \omega_0)$, perhaps with a different symbol for Γ that represents the total homogeneous width. The A_{ik} factor usually represents the *rate* of the transition. Sometimes, $P_{ik}(\omega)$ is written to represent not just the shape but also the strength, in which case A_{ik} might be related to the transition probability or cross-section. For now, let's assume $P_{ik}(\omega)$ *is* the normalized Lorentzian function $L(\Delta\omega)$, and Γ is the total homogeneous width from all contributing factors (natural lifetime, collisions, etc.). This is the standard convention. The $P_{ik}(\omega) = A_{ik}\,L(\omega - \omega_0)$ on slide 10 might be a slight misstatement if P is meant to be the normalized lineshape and L is also normalized. More commonly, one would write

$$P_{ik}(\omega) = L(\omega - \omega_0)$$

where L itself incorporates the width parameter Γ. Or, if A_{ik} is to be interpreted as something like a transition strength, then L must be a shape function whose integral might be 1, but the overall P_{ik} would not be normalized to 1 unless $A_{ik} = 1$. Given that P_{ik} was defined as a normalized probability density, it's most likely that $P_{ik}(\omega)$ *is* the function $L(\Delta\omega)$ with Γ being the pertinent decay rate. Let's proceed assuming Γ in the Lorentzian is the key parameter determining its width, and it is related to inverse lifetimes.

Page 12:

Continuing with the Lorentzian line shape, this page describes some key characteristics.

First, a very important relationship: **Capital Gamma is identically equal to** $\Gamma = \frac{1}{\tau_{sp}}$ — Full width at half maximum (FWHM) in angular- frequency units. Here, τ_{sp} is specifically identified as the spontaneous emission lifetime. This means that for purely natural broadening (no collisions, no other dephasing mechanisms), the FWHM of the Lorentzian profile, capital Gamma, is simply the inverse of the spontaneous lifetime of the excited state. If other homogeneous broadening mechanisms are present, like collisional dephasing with a characteristic time T_2 (Tee two), then the total homogeneous linewidth Gamma would be given by something like $\frac{1}{\tau_{sp}} + \frac{2}{T_2}$ (depending on the precise definition of T_2 for phase-perturbing collisions). For now, let's stick to the simple case where $\Gamma = \frac{1}{\tau_{sp}}$. This directly connects a measurable spectral width (Γ) to a fundamental atomic property (τ_{sp}). The units of Gamma are radians per second if τ_{sp} is in seconds.

Now, for the **Visual Characteristics** of the Lorentzian profile:

* **Symmetric peak centred at** ω_0. If you plot $L(\Delta\omega)$ versus ω (or $\Delta\omega$), you'll see a bell-shaped curve, but it's not a Gaussian. It's symmetric around its peak, which occurs at $\Delta\omega = 0$, meaning $\omega = \omega_0$. The maximum value of $L(\Delta\omega)$ occurs at $\omega = \omega_0$. If you substitute $\Delta\omega = 0$ into the formula for $L(\Delta\omega)$, you get

$$L(0) = \frac{1}{\pi} \cdot \frac{\frac{1}{2}\Gamma}{\left(\frac{1}{2}\Gamma\right)^2} = \frac{1}{\pi} \cdot \frac{2}{\Gamma} = \frac{2}{\pi\Gamma}.$$

This is the peak height of the normalized Lorentzian.

* **Long algebraic "wings" decreasing as $\frac{1}{(\Delta\omega)^2}$.** This is a very distinctive feature of the Lorentzian. As you move away from the center of the line (i.e., as $\Delta\omega$ becomes large), the $\left(\frac{1}{2}\Gamma\right)^2$ term in the denominator becomes negligible compared to $(\Delta\omega)^2$. So, $L(\Delta\omega)$ behaves like $\frac{1}{\pi} \cdot \frac{\frac{1}{2}\Gamma}{(\Delta\omega)^2}$. It falls off as one over the square of the detuning. This is a much slower fall-off than a Gaussian profile, which falls off exponentially. These "Lorentzian wings" mean that even far from resonance, there's still a non-negligible probability of interaction. This has important consequences in many spectroscopic situations, for example, in power broadening or in the far-wing absorption of atmospheric gases.

So, key takeaways for the Lorentzian: centered at ω_0, FWHM is Γ, and it has these characteristic one-over-$\Delta\omega$-squared wings.

Page 13:

This page shows a graph of the **Lorentzian Line Shape**, which beautifully illustrates the characteristics we just discussed.

Let's describe the graph:

The horizontal axis is labeled ω, representing angular frequency. Several points are marked: ω_0 (the center), $\omega_0 - \frac{\Gamma}{2}$, $\omega_0 + \frac{\Gamma}{2}$, and further out, $\omega_0 - \Gamma$ and $\omega_0 + \Gamma$.

The vertical axis is labeled L, representing the value of the Lorentzian function, $L(\omega - \omega_0)$. The peak height, which occurs at $\omega = \omega_0$, is labeled as $\frac{2}{\pi\Gamma}$. This matches what we calculated.

Another point is marked on the vertical axis: $\frac{1}{\pi\Gamma}$, which is exactly half the peak height.

The curve itself, shown in blue, is a symmetric peak.

Now, let's focus on the Full Width at Half Maximum (FWHM).

There's a horizontal dashed red arrow drawn across the peak, at the height corresponding to half the maximum value (i.e., at $\frac{1}{\pi\Gamma}$ on the vertical axis). This arrow extends from a point on the left side of the curve to a point on the right. Vertical dashed lines drop from these points to the ω-axis.

The left intersection with the ω-axis is precisely at $\omega_0 - \frac{\Gamma}{2}$. The right intersection with the ω-axis is precisely at $\omega_0 + \frac{\Gamma}{2}$.

The total width between these two points is $\left(\omega_0 + \frac{\Gamma}{2}\right) - \left(\omega_0 - \frac{\Gamma}{2}\right)$, which equals Γ.

This visually confirms that Γ is indeed the Full Width at Half Maximum of the Lorentzian profile. This parameter, Γ, is what characterizes the "width" of the homogeneous broadening. The narrower the Γ, the sharper the spectral line.

You can also see the "wings" of the Lorentzian extending out from the center. They decrease, but as we discussed, they decrease algebraically (as $\frac{1}{(\Delta\omega)^2}$), not exponentially, so they are more extended than, say, a Gaussian of the same FWHM.

This graphical representation is essential. When you see a spectrum in the lab that has this characteristic shape – a sharp peak with extended wings – you immediately suspect that a Lorentzian profile, and thus a homogeneous broadening mechanism, is at play.

Page 14:

Now we turn to the second major category of line broadening, presented on **Slide 5: Introducing Inhomogeneous Broadening.**

The core definition is given at the top: **Inhomogeneous means "different subsets of the ensemble contribute different centre frequencies".**

This is the absolute key distinction from homogeneous broadening. In homogeneous broadening, every atom or molecule had the same intrinsic line shape centered at the same frequency. Here, in inhomogeneous broadening, while each individual atom or molecule might still have its own (often homogeneous) line shape, the *center frequency* of that line shape is different for different groups of particles within the ensemble. The overall observed spectral line is then the sum, or more accurately, the envelope, of all these slightly shifted individual contributions.

Let's look at point 1: **Underlying Mechanism. Property that varies from particle to particle: here, centre frequency depends on velocity v.** For inhomogeneous broadening to occur, there must be some property that is not uniform across the ensemble of particles, and this property must affect the resonant frequency of the transition. The most common example, and the one we will focus on, is the velocity of the particles, denoted by v. Due to the Doppler effect, atoms moving towards a light source see the light blue-shifted (higher frequency), and atoms moving away see it red-shifted (lower frequency). Since particles in a gas have a distribution of velocities (e.g., the Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution), they will have a distribution of Doppler shifts, and thus a distribution of their apparent resonant frequencies.

Point 2: **Most Important Laboratory Example — Doppler Broadening.** Indeed, for gases at typical temperatures, Doppler broadening is often the dominant inhomogeneous broadening mechanism, especially for optical transitions. Its width can be orders of magnitude larger than the natural (homogeneous) linewidth. This is why developing Doppler-free spectroscopy techniques was such a major breakthrough for high-resolution spectroscopy.

Point 3: **Implication for Observed Line.** This is crucial for understanding what we actually measure.

Page 15:

Continuing with the implications for the observed line in inhomogeneous broadening:

The statement says: **Macroscopic profile is a convolution of the single-particle homogeneous line with the distribution of velocities.** This is a very important concept. Let's break it down.

Each individual particle (or, more precisely, each small group of particles with nearly the same value of the varying property, like velocity) has its own intrinsic line shape. This intrinsic line shape is often homogeneous (e.g., a Lorentzian due to natural lifetime and collisions that don't change its velocity class). Let's call this homogeneous line shape $g_{\text{h}}(\omega - \omega')$, where ω' is the center frequency for *that particular particle or subgroup*.

Now, because of the inhomogeneous effect (like Doppler shifts), ω' is not the same for all particles. There's a distribution of these center frequencies, let's say $f(\omega')$.

The observed macroscopic line shape, $P_{\text{observed}}(\omega)$, is then the sum of all these individual g_{h} contributions, weighted by how many particles have that particular ω'. Mathematically, this is a convolution:

$$P_{\text{observed}}(\omega) = \int g_{\text{h}}(\omega - \omega')\, f(\omega')\, d\omega'$$

In the context of Doppler broadening, the "distribution of velocities" (e.g., Maxwell-Boltzmann) directly translates into a distribution of center frequencies $f(\omega')$ due to the Doppler shift. Each velocity group has its own Lorentzian (the single-particle homogeneous line), and the sum of all these Lorentzians, appropriately shifted and weighted by the velocity distribution, gives the overall observed Doppler-broadened profile, which is typically a Gaussian.

Point 4: **Contrast to Homogeneous Case.**

No single, universal line shape per particle; instead, each velocity subclass sees a shifted resonance.

Well, to be more precise, each particle *does* have its own intrinsic (often homogeneous) line shape. The point is that the *center frequency* of this intrinsic line shape is different for different particles (or different velocity subclasses). So, if you were to probe the ensemble with a very narrow-band laser, only a specific subgroup of particles – those whose Doppler-shifted resonance matches the laser frequency – would interact strongly. If you tune the laser, a different subgroup interacts.

This is fundamentally different from the homogeneous case, where if you tune your laser through the line, *all* particles respond with the same profile, just with varying strength as you move away from their common center frequency.

The three dashes at the bottom indicate there might be more to say or that it's a transition to the next idea. The key takeaway is that an inhomogeneously broadened line is a "collection" of narrower lines, each from a different subset of atoms. This structure is hidden within the overall profile but can be revealed by clever spectroscopic techniques.

Page 16:

Alright, let's delve into the specifics of the most common example of inhomogeneous broadening with **Slide 6: Doppler Broadening — Fundamental Kinematics.**

First, we look at the **Doppler Shift for a Single Particle.**

The equation given is:

$$\omega = \omega_0 + \mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{v}.$$

Let's understand each term:

- ω is the angular frequency of light *as observed by the particle* (or equivalently, the particle's resonant frequency as observed in the lab frame if ω_0 is its rest-frame resonant frequency). This is the frequency that "matters" for resonant interaction. Its units are radians per second.

- ω_0 is the resonant angular frequency of the particle *in its own rest frame*. This is

$$\frac{E_\mathrm{k} - E_\mathrm{i}}{\hbar},$$

the value we'd measure if the particle were stationary. Units are radians per second.

- k is the **wave-vector of the probe radiation.** The wave-vector k points in the direction of light propagation, and its magnitude, little k, is given by

$$k = \frac{2\pi}{\lambda},$$

where λ is the wavelength of the light. The units of k are radians per meter.

- v is the **particle velocity vector.** Its units are meters per second.

- $\mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{v}$ is the dot product of the wave-vector and the particle velocity vector. This term represents the Doppler shift. $\mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{v} = k\, v \cos(\theta)$, where v is the speed of the particle and θ is the angle between the particle's velocity and the light propagation direction. If the particle is moving towards the light source (i.e. $\theta = \pi$ or 180 degrees, so $\cos(\theta) = -1$, assuming v is defined as velocity magnitude and direction is handled by the dot product or a component), then $\mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{v}$ is negative if v points opposite to k.

Ah, let's be careful. The equation is

$$\omega = \omega_0 + \mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{v}.$$

If the particle moves towards the source, v and k are in opposite directions for absorption of a photon coming from the source. Let's simplify by choosing the z-axis along k.

The slide says: "choose v_{z} along k." This implies we are interested in the component of the particle's velocity *along the direction of light propagation*. Let's denote this component as v_{z}. Then, if v_{z} is positive (particle moving in the same direction as light), the frequency ω is higher (blue-shifted for the particle experiencing an approaching source if it were emitting, or red-shifted if it's absorbing light from behind). If v_{z} is negative (particle moving opposite to light), ω is lower (red-shifted for particle, or blue-shifted source for absorption).

Let's rephrase the Doppler shift for clarity, especially for absorption of a laser beam by a moving atom. If ω_{L} is the lab-frame laser frequency, the atom sees this frequency as

$$\omega_{\mathrm{atom}} = \omega_{\mathrm{L}}\left(1 - \frac{v_{\mathrm{z}}}{c}\right)$$

for non-relativistic speeds, where v_{z} is the velocity component along the laser beam's direction (positive if moving with the beam, negative if against). For resonance, ω_{atom} must equal ω_0. So,

$$\omega_{\mathrm{L}}\left(1 - \frac{v_{\mathrm{z}}}{c}\right) = \omega_0,$$

which means

$$\omega_{\mathrm{L}} \approx \omega_0\left(1 + \frac{v_{\mathrm{z}}}{c}\right).$$

The equation on the slide,

$$\omega = \omega_0 + \mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{v},$$

usually describes the observed frequency ω if ω_0 is the emitted rest frequency. If ω_0 is the atom's rest resonant frequency and ω is the lab laser frequency it interacts with, then the lab laser frequency ω needs to be $\omega_0 - \mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{v}$ from the atom's perspective, or the atom's resonant frequency in the lab frame is $\omega_0 + \mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{v}$.

Yes, so if an atom with rest resonant frequency ω_0 is moving with velocity v, it will resonantly absorb or emit light of lab frequency

$$\omega = \omega_0 + \mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{v}.$$

If v_{z} is the component of velocity *along* the k vector of the light, then $\mathbf{k} \cdot \mathbf{v}$ becomes simply $k\, v_{\mathrm{z}}$. So,

$$\omega = \omega_0 + k\, v_{\mathrm{z}}.$$

Here, a positive v_{z} (atom moving in the same direction as the light wave) means it resonates with a lab frequency ω that is *higher* than ω_0 if it's absorbing the light from behind it, or it needs to "catch up" to the light frequency.

Let's think about an atom absorbing a laser beam propagating in the $+z$ direction. If the atom moves in the $+z$ direction ($v_{\mathrm{z}} > 0$), it "sees" the laser frequency red-shifted. So, for resonance, the lab laser frequency must be higher:

$$\omega_{\mathrm{L}} = \frac{\omega_0}{1 - \frac{v_{\mathrm{z}}}{c}} \approx \omega_0 \left(1 + \frac{v_{\mathrm{z}}}{c}\right) = \omega_0 + \frac{\omega_0}{c}\, v_{\mathrm{z}} = \omega_0 + k\, v_{\mathrm{z}}.$$

This is consistent.

If the atom moves in the $-z$ direction ($v_{\mathrm{z}} < 0$, moving towards the laser), it "sees" the laser frequency blue-shifted. So, for resonance, the lab laser frequency must be lower:

$$\omega_{\mathrm{L}} = \frac{\omega_0}{1 + \frac{|v_{\mathrm{z}}|}{c}} \approx \omega_0 \left(1 - \frac{|v_{\mathrm{z}}|}{c}\right) = \omega_0 - k\, |v_{\mathrm{z}}| = \omega_0 + k\, v_{\mathrm{z}},$$

since v_{z} itself is negative. This is also consistent.

So the formula

$$\omega = \omega_0 + k\, v_\mathrm{z}$$

correctly gives the lab-frame frequency ω that an atom with rest-frame resonance ω_0 and velocity component v_z (along k) will interact with.

Now, the crucial part: **Velocity Distribution (Thermal Ensemble).**

Particles in a gas at thermal equilibrium are not all stationary, nor do they all have the same velocity. Their velocities are described by a statistical distribution.

Page 17:

Continuing our discussion of Doppler broadening, we now consider the velocity distribution.

* **Maxwell-Boltzmann in 1-D:**

Since the Doppler shift $\omega = \omega_\mathrm{naught} + k v_\mathrm{z}$ only depends on v_z (the component of velocity along the wave-vector k of the light), we only need the one-dimensional Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution for v_z. This distribution gives the probability density $f(v_\mathrm{z})$ of finding a particle with a velocity component between v_z and $v_\mathrm{z} + dv_\mathrm{z}$.

The formula for $f(v_\mathrm{z})$ is given as:

$$f(v_\mathrm{z}) = \sqrt{\frac{m}{2\pi k_\mathrm{B} T}} \exp\left[-\frac{m v_\mathrm{z}^2}{2 k_\mathrm{B} T}\right]$$

Let's break this down:

* $f(v_\mathrm{z})$ is the probability density function for the velocity component v_z.

* m is the **Particle mass** in kilograms (kg). Heavier particles will have a narrower velocity distribution at the same temperature.

* k_B (k subscript B) is the **Boltzmann constant**, approximately 1.38×10^{-23} Joules per Kelvin (J K^{-1}).

* T is the **Absolute temperature** in Kelvin (K). Higher temperatures lead to a broader velocity distribution.

* The term **square root of** $\frac{m}{2\pi k_\mathrm{B} T}$ is a normalization factor. It ensures that if you integrate $f(v_\mathrm{z})\, dv_\mathrm{z}$ from minus infinity to plus infinity, you get 1.

* The exponential term, $\exp\left[-\frac{m v_\mathrm{z}^2}{2 k_\mathrm{B} T}\right]$, is a Gaussian function of v_z. It's centered at $v_\mathrm{z} = 0$ (meaning the most probable velocity component along any given axis is zero) and its width depends on $\frac{T}{m}$.

This $f(v_\mathrm{z})$ tells us how the atoms are distributed according to their velocity component v_z. Since each v_z corresponds to a different resonant frequency $\omega = \omega_\text{naught} + k v_\mathrm{z}$, this distribution of velocities will directly map onto a distribution of resonant frequencies. This leads to the **Resulting Spectral Envelope.**

Because $f(v_\mathrm{z})$ is a Gaussian in v_z, and ω is linearly related to v_z $\left(\omega - \omega_\text{naught} = k v_\mathrm{z}\right)$, the distribution of resonant frequencies, $P(\omega)$, will also be a Gaussian function of ω, centered at ω_naught. This is the Doppler-broadened line shape.

Page 18:

So, what is the shape and width of this Doppler-broadened spectral line?

* **Convolution yields a Gaussian Doppler profile with FWHM...**

As we reasoned, since the velocity distribution $f(v_\mathrm{z})$ is Gaussian, and the frequency shift is linear in v_z, the resulting spectral line shape due to Doppler broadening is also a Gaussian.

The Full Width at Half Maximum (FWHM) of this Gaussian profile, denoted here as $\Delta\omega_D$ (Delta omega subscript D for Doppler), is given by the formula:

$$\Delta\omega_\mathrm{D} = 2\omega_0\sqrt{\frac{2k_\mathrm{B}T\ln 2}{mc^2}}.$$

Let's carefully examine the terms in this important formula:

* $\Delta\omega_D$ is the FWHM of the Doppler-broadened line in angular frequency units (radians per second). * ω_0 is the central angular frequency of the transition (the rest-frame frequency). The Doppler width is proportional to the transition frequency itself. This means higher frequency (e.g., UV, X-ray) transitions will have a much larger absolute Doppler width than lower frequency (e.g., microwave, radiofrequency) transitions, for the same temperature and mass. * k_B is the Boltzmann constant (Joules per Kelvin). * T is the absolute temperature (Kelvin). Higher temperature means greater average speeds, larger Doppler shifts, and thus a wider line. $\Delta\omega_\mathrm{D}$ is proportional to $\sqrt{T}$. * $\ln 2$ is the natural logarithm of 2, approximately 0.693. This factor often appears in relating the standard deviation of a Gaussian to its FWHM. (FWHM $= 2\sqrt{2\ln 2}\,\sigma$). * m is the mass of the particle (atom or molecule) in kilograms. Heavier particles move slower on average at a given temperature, so their Doppler broadening is less. $\Delta\omega_\mathrm{D}$ is proportional to $\frac{1}{\sqrt{m}}$. * c is the speed of light in vacuum (meters per second). The term mc^2 is the rest mass energy of the particle.

This formula is extremely useful. It allows you to calculate the expected Doppler width for any transition, given the particle mass, temperature, and transition frequency. In many gas-phase experiments at optical frequencies and room temperature, $\Delta\omega_\mathrm{D}$ is significantly larger than the natural linewidth Γ. For example, for visible light and typical atomic masses at room temperature, the Doppler width can be hundreds of MHz to several GHz, while natural linewidths might be a few MHz. This is why Doppler broadening often masks the finer details of the homogeneous line shape.

Page 19:

This page presents a beautiful illustration titled **Inhomogeneous Broadening: Doppler Profile.**

Let's analyze this graph carefully. The horizontal axis is labeled **Frequency Shift (**$\omega - \omega_0$). The center is at 0, corresponding to the rest-frame resonant frequency ω_0. The axis extends from -150 to +150 in some arbitrary units (perhaps MHz or scaled units). The vertical axis is labeled **Intensity (a.u.)**, meaning arbitrary units. The peak is normalized to 1.0.

What we see are two main features:

1. A series of many **narrow, light blue-grey lines** or curves. An annotation says: **"Narrow lines: Homogeneous response of individual velocity groups."** Each of these narrow lines represents the homogeneous line shape (e.g., a Lorentzian with width Γ) for a specific, narrow subgroup of atoms that all have approximately the same velocity component v_z along the direction of observation. Because each velocity group has a different v_z, its homogeneous line is Doppler-shifted by kv_z. So, we see a series of these homogeneous "packets" or "islands," each centered at a slightly different frequency shift. The width of each individual narrow line is the homogeneous width, Γ.

2. A broad, solid dark blue curve that forms an envelope over all these narrow lines. An annotation points to this curve and says: **"Doppler Profile."** This is the overall observed spectral line shape. It is the sum (or convolution) of all the individual, shifted homogeneous lines, weighted by the Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution of velocities. As we discussed, this resulting envelope is a Gaussian function. Its FWHM is the Doppler width, $\Delta\omega_D$, which is typically much larger than the FWHM (Γ) of the individual narrow homogeneous lines.

This diagram perfectly visualizes the concept of inhomogeneous broadening: the overall broad line (the Doppler Profile) is *composed* of many narrower lines from different velocity classes. The laser, if it's narrow enough, can interact selectively with just one or a few of these "homogeneous islands" or "velocity groups." This is the basis for techniques like hole burning in saturation spectroscopy, where a strong laser can deplete the population of a specific velocity group, creating a "hole" in the Doppler profile that can be detected by a weaker probe laser.

The visual makes it clear: the Doppler width $\Delta\omega_{\mathrm{D}}$ is determined by the range of velocities, while the width of the little "spikes" within it is the homogeneous width Γ.

Page 20:

Slide 7: Velocity Sub-Grouping — “Homogeneous Islands" Inside Doppler Sea

1. **Conceptual Partition:**

The idea is to **Divide the velocity axis into slices of width** Δv_{z}. How wide should these slices be? The slide gives a criterion: $\Delta v_{\mathrm{z}} = \frac{\delta\omega_{\mathrm{n}}}{k}$. Let's understand this.

* Δv_{z} (Delta v subscript z) is the width of a velocity slice along the observation axis (the z-axis, which is along the wave-vector k). * $\delta\omega_{\mathrm{n}}$ (lowercase delta omega subscript n) is defined as the **natural (homogeneous) linewidth.** This is our capital Gamma from before, or more generally, the homogeneous linewidth due to all effects (natural lifetime, collisions that don't change v_{z}). Let's use Γ_{h} for homogeneous width to be consistent. So, $\delta\omega_{\mathrm{n}} = \Gamma_{\mathrm{h}}$. * k is the magnitude of the wave-vector of the light ($k = \frac{\omega_0}{c} = \frac{2\pi}{\lambda}$).

What does this equation $\Delta v_{\mathrm{z}} = \frac{\Gamma_{\mathrm{h}}}{k}$ mean? Recall the Doppler shift formula: the shift in frequency, let's call it Ω_{shift}, is k times v_{z}. So, a change in velocity Δv_{z} corresponds to a change in frequency shift $\Delta\Omega_{\mathrm{shift}} = k\Delta v_{\mathrm{z}}$. If we choose Δv_{z} such that $k\Delta v_{\mathrm{z}}$ is equal to the homogeneous linewidth Γ_{h}, then all atoms within this velocity slice Δv_{z} will have their center frequencies Doppler-shifted into a frequency range that is no wider than their own intrinsic homogeneous linewidth. In other words, within such a velocity slice, the Doppler spread of center frequencies ($k\Delta v_{\mathrm{z}}$) is comparable to or smaller than the homogeneous width Γ_{h} of each atom in that slice. Therefore, all atoms in this slice can be considered to respond *coherently* or *homogeneously* to a monochromatic laser field whose frequency falls within their collective response band. They form a "homogeneous packet" or "island."

2. **Each Slice Behaves Homogeneously:**

This is the consequence of the partitioning. If you pick a laser with a linewidth much narrower than Γ_{h}, and you tune it to interact with one of these velocity slices, all the atoms in that slice will essentially respond together, as if they were a single, homogeneously broadened group.

This concept of velocity sub-grouping is fundamental to understanding many laser spectroscopy techniques that aim to overcome Doppler broadening, such as saturation spectroscopy. We are essentially "dissecting" the inhomogeneous Doppler profile into its constituent homogeneous components.

Page 21:

Continuing with the idea of velocity sub-grouping:

The slide states: **All particles in slice centred at** v_{z} share a common Doppler-shifted resonance.

Their resonant frequency in the lab frame will be:

$$\omega = \omega_0 + kv_\mathrm{z}$$

Where v_z here is the central velocity of that particular slice. Of course, there's a small spread $\varDelta v_\mathrm{z}$ around this central v_z, leading to a small spread $k\varDelta v_\mathrm{z}$ in frequencies, but as we defined on the previous page, this spread is on the order of or smaller than the homogeneous linewidth $\varGamma_\mathrm{h}$. So, to a good approximation, all particles in that slice "see" the laser at effectively the same detuning from their individual, identically broadened, homogeneous lines.

3. **Mathematical Viewpoint:**

Total profile = sum over Lorentzians of each subgroup, weighted by $f(v_\mathrm{z})$.

This reiterates what we saw in the diagram on page 19. The overall observed inhomogeneous line shape (e.g., the Doppler profile) is a summation (or integral, if we treat v_z as continuous) of the homogeneous line shapes (typically Lorentzians with width $\varGamma_\mathrm{h}$) from each velocity subgroup. Each subgroup's Lorentzian is centered at $\omega_0 + kv_\mathrm{z}$. And importantly, each of these Lorentzians is weighted by $f(v_\mathrm{z})$, which is the Maxwell-Boltzmann probability of finding an atom in that velocity subgroup v_z. This is precisely the convolution we talked about earlier. If the homogeneous lines are Lorentzians and the weighting $f(v_\mathrm{z})$ (which translates to a distribution of center frequencies) is Gaussian, the resulting convolution is known as a Voigt profile. If the homogeneous width $\varGamma_\mathrm{h}$ is much smaller than the Doppler width $\varDelta\omega_\mathrm{D}$, the Voigt profile closely approximates a Gaussian. If $\varGamma_\mathrm{h}$ is much larger, it approximates a Lorentzian.

4. **Experimental Relevance:**

Why is this concept of "homogeneous islands" so important experimentally?

Page 22:

The experimental relevance is profound: **Laser spectroscopists target individual slices (e.g., saturation spectroscopy) to “beat” Doppler broadening.**

This is the key. Because a laser can be made highly monochromatic (its linewidth can be much smaller than Γ_{h}, and certainly much smaller than $\Delta\omega_{\mathrm{D}}$), it can selectively interact with only one (or a few) of these velocity subgroups – one of those "homogeneous islands" within the vast "Doppler sea."

For example, in **saturation spectroscopy**, a strong "pump" laser beam is tuned to a specific frequency ω_{L}. It will primarily interact with and saturate the transition for only those atoms whose velocity v_{z} satisfies $\omega_{\mathrm{L}} = \omega_{\mathrm{naught}} + kv_{\mathrm{z}}$ (and also those with v_{z} such that $\omega_{\mathrm{L}} = \omega_{\mathrm{naught}} - kv_{\mathrm{z}}$ if a counter-propagating beam is used, which is key for the technique). By saturating this subgroup, we modify its population or its ability to absorb. A second, weaker "probe" beam can then detect this modification. When both beams interact with the *same* velocity group (typically the $v_{\mathrm{z}} = 0$ group if the beams are counter-propagating and tuned near ω_{naught}), we can observe a sharp feature (a "Lamb dip" or a saturation peak) whose width is close to the homogeneous linewidth Γ_{h}, not the much broader Doppler width $\Delta\omega_{\mathrm{D}}$.

This is how we "beat" Doppler broadening – by not trying to address the whole inhomogeneous line at once, but by using the laser's selectivity to pick out and study a single homogeneous component. This allows for much higher resolution and precision in determining the true resonant frequency ω_{naught} and in studying the underlying homogeneous lineshape.

The three dashes suggest a transition or end of this particular thought. The power of laser spectroscopy often lies in its ability to overcome inhomogeneous broadening and reveal the true, underlying physics masked by it.

Page 23:

Slide 8: Collisional Broadening — Two Fundamental Types.

We've already touched upon collisions as a source of homogeneous broadening, but let's look at them in more detail. Collisions are ubiquitous in gas-phase spectroscopy (unless you're in an ultra-high vacuum or a very dilute beam) and can significantly affect line shapes.

The first type is: **1. Inelastic (Amplitude-Perturbing) Collisions.**

* **Energy exchange between colliders.** This is the defining characteristic. In an inelastic collision involving an atom in an excited state (say, our state E_i), the atom can lose energy to the collision partner, causing it to transition to a lower energy state (perhaps E_k, or some other state E_m). This process is often called "quenching" if the atom de-excites non-radiatively. It can also be that the atom gains energy if the collision partner is sufficiently energetic, or transitions between different sub-levels of the same electronic state. The key is that the population of the specific state E_i that we are probing is changed by the collision.

* **Shortens excited-state lifetime** τ to τ', where τ' is less than τ. If τ was the natural lifetime (due only to spontaneous emission), then inelastic collisions provide an *additional* pathway for the atom to leave the excited state E_i. This means the actual time an atom spends in state E_i, on average, is reduced. The effective lifetime, τ', becomes shorter than the natural lifetime τ. The collisional quenching rate, let's call it $\Gamma_{\mathrm{coll\ inel}}$, adds to the spontaneous emission rate Γ_{nat} (which is $\frac{1}{\tau}$). So the total decay rate from state E_i becomes

$$\Gamma_{\mathrm{total}} = \Gamma_{\mathrm{nat}} + \Gamma_{\mathrm{coll\ inel}},$$

and the effective lifetime τ' is

$$\tau' = \frac{1}{\mathit{\Gamma}_{\text{total}}}.$$

* **Result: Increases homogeneous width capital** $\mathit{\Gamma}$. Since the homogeneous linewidth (from the uncertainty principle, roughly speaking) is inversely proportional to the lifetime (or coherence time), shortening the effective lifetime *increases* the linewidth. So, inelastic collisions contribute to homogeneous broadening. The total homogeneous width $\mathit{\Gamma}_{\text{h}}$ would be

$$\mathit{\Gamma}_{\text{h}} = \mathit{\Gamma}_{\text{nat}} + \mathit{\Gamma}_{\text{coll inel}} + \text{other broadening terms.}$$

This contribution is homogeneous because, typically, all atoms in the ensemble are subject to the same statistical rate of such collisions, assuming uniform conditions.

Now for the second type: **2. Elastic (Phase-Perturbing) Collisions.** These are often even more important for line broadening in many situations.

Page 24:

Continuing with the second type of collisional broadening, elastic (phase-perturbing) collisions:

* **No energy exchange, velocity unchanged.** This is the ideal definition of a purely phase-perturbing collision in this context. The internal state of the atom (E_{i} or E_{k}) does not change. The atom neither gains nor loses internal energy. Furthermore, for it to be purely a phase perturbation *without* introducing inhomogeneous character (like Doppler shifts changing), we also assume here that the collision does *not* significantly alter the atom's velocity v_{z}. This is an idealization; real collisions will often involve some velocity change. But the primary effect we are focusing on here is the phase interruption.

* **Introduce random phase jumps.** Imagine the atom's oscillating dipole moment, which is responsible for emitting or absorbing light. It's oscillating at roughly the frequency ω_{naught}. A phase-perturbing collision abruptly

changes the phase of this oscillation without stopping the oscillation itself (i.e., without changing the energy state). So, the wave train being emitted (or the coherence being built up for absorption) has its phase suddenly randomized.

* **Fourier transform of interrupted oscillations leads to additional Lorentzian broadening.** This is a key insight from Fourier theory. A perfectly monochromatic, infinitely long sine wave has an infinitely sharp Fourier transform (a delta function in frequency). If you start chopping this sine wave into finite segments, or if you randomly interrupt its phase, its Fourier spectrum broadens. Each interruption effectively ends one coherent segment and starts a new one with a random phase. The shorter the average time between these phase-interrupting collisions (let's call this time T_2, the phase coherence time), the broader the frequency spectrum. This type of broadening also results in a Lorentzian line shape. The contribution to the homogeneous width from these collisions is typically on the order of $\frac{1}{T_2}$ (or $\frac{2}{T_2}$ depending on definitions).

Now, the **Unified Outcome** for both these types of "state-preserving" (in terms of v_z) collisions: **Both mechanisms preserve the homogeneous nature:** This means that $P_{ik}(\omega)$, which might have been a narrow Lorentzian due to just natural lifetime, after considering these collisions, becomes a **broader Lorentzian.** The slide shows: $P_{ik}(\omega)$ --- (collisions) ---> broader Lorentzian. The collisions effectively increase the value of the capital Γ parameter in the Lorentzian function. So, the total homogeneous linewidth Γ_h will be a sum of contributions:

$$\Gamma_\text{h} = \Gamma_{\text{natural}} + \Gamma_{\text{coll\_\text{inelastic}}} + \Gamma_{\text{coll\_\text{phase}\_\text{perturbing}}}$$

All these add up to give a single, overall homogeneous Lorentzian profile for each atom, assuming these are the only effects.

Page 25:

This page indicates: **[IMAGE REQUIRED: Cartoon comparing atomic dipole oscillation trains with/without phase interruptions.]**

Okay, since we don't have the image, let me describe what it would ideally show and why it's pedagogically useful. Imagine two scenarios depicted side-by-side.

Scenario 1: No Phase Interruptions (or only natural decay)

- You would see a representation of an atomic dipole oscillating smoothly. This could be drawn as a sine wave (representing, say, the expectation value of the dipole moment over time).
- This sine wave would have a constant amplitude (or an amplitude that decays exponentially with the natural lifetime τ_{sp}, if we are focusing on the emission process).
- Crucially, the phase of the oscillation would be continuous. The wave train would be long and coherent.
- Below this time-domain representation, you might see its Fourier transform in the frequency domain: a relatively narrow Lorentzian peak, with a width Γ_{natural}.

Scenario 2: With Phase Interruptions due to Elastic Collisions

- Again, you'd see an oscillating dipole, perhaps drawn as a sine wave.
- However, at random intervals (corresponding to the times of collisions), the phase of the sine wave abruptly jumps. So, you'd see segments of smooth sine waves, but at each "collision point," the wave restarts with a new, random phase relative to where it would have been. The amplitude might remain largely unchanged between these phase jumps if the collisions are purely phase-perturbing.

- The average duration of these coherent segments is related to T_2, the phase coherence time.

- Below this time-domain picture of interrupted oscillations, you'd see its Fourier transform. Because the coherent segments are now shorter on average than in Scenario 1, the resulting Lorentzian peak in the frequency domain would be visibly **broader**. Its width would be determined by both the natural lifetime and the rate of these phase-interrupting collisions.

The Pedagogical Value:

This kind of cartoon is extremely effective for building intuition. It visually connects the time-domain picture (the lifetime of the state, the coherence of the oscillation) with the frequency-domain picture (the spectral linewidth). Students can *see* that interrupting the coherence in time leads to a spreading out in frequency. It makes the Fourier relationship between time and frequency much more tangible in the context of line broadening. It also helps to solidify why these phase-perturbing collisions, even though they don't change the energy state, still contribute to broadening the spectral line. They "spoil" the perfection of the emitted or absorbed wave.

The three dashes again indicate a pause or transition.

Page 26:

Now we come to a more complex scenario on **Slide 9: Velocity-Changing Collisions (VCC) — New Complication.**

So far, when we discussed collisions in the context of homogeneous broadening, we either explicitly assumed they didn't change velocity or implicitly ignored velocity changes. Now, we confront them directly. Velocity-Changing Collisions, or VCCs, can significantly alter line shapes, especially when we are trying to do Doppler-free spectroscopy.

1. **Physical Event:**

During collision, centre-of-mass momentum is redistributed implies the velocity component v_z shifts by u_z.

So, an atom (our spectroscopically active particle) collides with another particle (a buffer gas atom, for example). In this collision, momentum is exchanged. This will, in general, change the velocity vector **v** of our atom of interest. Specifically, the component of velocity along the laser beam (or observation axis), v_z, can change. The slide says it shifts by u_z, where u_z is the change in the z-component of velocity due to that single collision. This u_z can be positive or negative, and there will be some probability distribution for u_z depending on the collision dynamics and masses.

2. **Transition Between Subgroups:**

Recall our "homogeneous islands" or velocity subgroups within the Doppler profile. Each subgroup was characterized by a particular v_z (within a small range Δv_z).

Particle moves from slice $(v_z \pm \Delta v_z)$ to $(v_z + u_z \pm \Delta v_z)$.

What this means is that a VCC can take an atom that was in one velocity subgroup (centered at v_z) and "kick" it into a *different* velocity subgroup (now centered at $v_z + u_z$). If the atom was resonating with our laser before the collision (because its v_z satisfied the Doppler condition), after the collision, its new $v_z + u_z$ might no longer satisfy the condition, or it might now satisfy it if it didn't before.

This is a crucial effect because it means atoms are not staying within their original velocity subgroups indefinitely. They are being shuffled around by these VCCs.

Page 27:

Continuing with Velocity-Changing Collisions:

3. **Resulting Frequency Jump:**

Since the resonant frequency in the lab frame is $\omega = \omega_{\text{naught}} + k\,v_{\text{z}}$, a change in v_{z} by u_{z} due to a collision will result in a jump in the resonant frequency:

$\omega \to \omega + k\,u_{\text{z}}$.

So, the atom, which was previously interacting with light at frequency ω, now needs to interact with light at a different frequency, $\omega + k\,u_{\text{z}}$, to be in resonance. This is a direct consequence of its change in velocity.

4. **Important Distinction:**

This frequency shift $(k\,u_{\text{z}})$ is not the same as the line shift produced by pure phase-perturbing collisions. This is a very important clarification.

Pure phase-perturbing collisions (the ideal ones we discussed earlier that don't change v_{z}) broaden the homogeneous line profile (e.g., make the Lorentzian wider). They might also cause a small *shift* of the entire Lorentzian if the interaction potential during the collision is different for the upper and lower states of the transition. This is often called "collisional shift" or "pressure shift," and it affects all atoms statistically in the same way (if the broadening is homogeneous), shifting the center of the homogeneous line.

The frequency jump $k\,u_{\text{z}}$ due to a VCC is different. It's a jump in the *center frequency* of the atom's resonance *within the inhomogeneous Doppler profile*. The atom moves from one "homogeneous island" to another. The intrinsic homogeneous width Γ_{h} of the atom's response might not even change much if the VCC itself is elastic and doesn't significantly shorten the coherence time. What changes is its Doppler class.

So, VCCs cause a redistribution of atoms among the different resonant frequencies under the Doppler envelope. This is not a broadening of the individual homogeneous packet itself in the same way phase or amplitude perturbation does, but rather a "spectral diffusion" or "velocity diffusion" process. Atoms diffuse across the Doppler profile.

This distinction is subtle but critical for understanding how VCCs affect high-resolution spectra, particularly in Doppler-free techniques.

Page 28:

This slide, also titled **Slide 9: Velocity-Changing Collisions (VCC) — New Complication**, provides visual aids for this concept. It has two panels.

(a) Velocity slices along Gaussian:

This panel shows a Gaussian distribution, $N(v_\mathrm{z})$, representing the number of atoms as a function of their z-component of velocity, v_z. This is essentially the Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution $f(v_\mathrm{z})$ we saw earlier, scaled by the total number of atoms. The horizontal axis is v_z, with 0 at the center.

Two vertical "slices" or bins are highlighted on this Gaussian. * A blue slice is centered at some initial velocity v_z. Its width is labeled as $2\Delta v_\mathrm{z}$. This represents one of our "homogeneous islands" or velocity subgroups. * An arrow labeled u_z (the change in velocity due to a collision) points from the center of the blue slice to the center of a red slice. * The red slice is centered at $v_\mathrm{z} + u_\mathrm{z}$. It also has a width, presumably $2\Delta v_\mathrm{z}$.

This diagram visually depicts an atom (or a group of atoms) that was initially in the blue velocity slice, undergoing a VCC that changes its v_z by an amount u_z, and thereby moving it into the red velocity slice. This directly illustrates the "transition between subgroups" we discussed. The atom is no longer part of the original velocity class that might have been interacting with a laser; it's now in a new class.

(b) Atom A deflected by atom B, altering v_z:

This panel shows a more microscopic picture of a collision. * We see two atoms, labeled A (blue) and B (red). Atom A has an initial velocity vector v_A. Atom B might be a buffer gas atom. * They collide. After the collision, atom A is shown moving off with a new velocity vector, deflected from its original path. * A vertical axis is shown, labeled z, representing the direction of laser propagation or observation. * Before the collision, atom A has a certain component of velocity along z, let's call it $v_{z,\text{initial}}$. * After the collision, atom A has a new z-component of velocity, $v_{z,\text{final}}$. This is shown as a shorter red upward arrow, indicating that in this particular illustrated collision, the z-component of velocity decreased. * The change, $v_{z,\text{final}} - v_{z,\text{initial}}$, is u_z. In this drawing, u_z would be negative. The diagram labels a downward arrow from the tip of $v_{z,\text{initial}}$ to the tip of $v_{z,\text{final}}$ as u_z, and another one from origin to u_z on the v_z axis pointing downwards. This seems a bit confusing. Let's assume u_z is simply the change in v_z. The original v_z is shown, then u_z is shown as a change, resulting in a new v_z which is $v_{z,\text{initial}} + u_\text{z}$. * The diagram shows an initial v_z (green up), then a u_z (red down from the tip of v_z), resulting in a final v_z (from origin to tip of u_z, also shown as a vector next to it). More clearly, there's an initial component v_z. A collision causes a change u_z (which can be positive or negative, here shown as negative if $+u_\text{z}$ is upwards). The new velocity component is $v_{z,\text{new}} = v_{z,\text{initial}} + u_\text{z}$. The diagram labels $+u_\text{z}$ on the axis itself, and then shows a vector u_z pointing downwards from the original v_z value to a new v_z value, which is then $v_\text{z} - |u_\text{z}|$. So, the shift is by an amount u_z.

The key message from panel (b) is that a physical collision between two particles causes a change in the velocity component relevant to the Doppler effect. Panel (a) shows the consequence: this moves the atom between different velocity subgroups under the overall Doppler profile.

These visuals are very helpful in cementing the idea of VCCs.

Page 29:

Slide 10: Collision Frequency vs Radiation Interaction Time.

We now move to **Slide 10: Collision Frequency vs Radiation Interaction Time.** This slide starts to explore the consequences of VCCs by comparing relevant timescales. This is crucial because whether VCCs significantly impact a spectroscopic measurement often depends on how frequently they occur compared to how long the atom interacts with the laser light.

First, let's define the **Mean Free Time Between Collisions.** This is denoted by **capital T**. The formula given is: $T = \frac{\Lambda}{\bar{v}}$

Let's break this down:

* **Capital T** is the average time an atom travels before it suffers a collision (any type of collision, though here we are particularly interested in VCCs). Units are seconds.

* **Capital Lambda (**Λ) is the **Mean free path**, measured in meters (m). This is the average distance an atom travels between collisions. It depends on the density of the gas (and thus pressure and temperature) and the collision cross-section between the particles. Higher pressure means smaller Lambda.

* **v-bar (**$\bar{v}$) is the **Mean thermal speed** of the atoms, in meters per second ($\mathrm{m}\,s^{-1}$). This is related to the temperature and mass of the particles (e.g., for Maxwell-Boltzmann, $\bar{v} = \sqrt{\frac{8k_\mathrm{B}T}{\pi m}}$).

So, $T = \frac{\text{distance}}{\text{speed}}$, which makes sense. This capital T tells us, on average, how long an atom "lives" with a particular velocity before a collision potentially changes it.

Page 30:

Now, let's consider the other important timescale: the **Interaction Time with Laser Field.** This is denoted by τ_c (tau subscript c).

The formula given is:

$$\tau_\mathrm{c} = \frac{L_{beam}}{\bar{v}}$$

Let's analyze this:

* τ_c is the characteristic time an atom spends interacting with the laser beam as it transits through it. Units are seconds.

* L_{beam} is the **Effective length of the illuminated region** in meters (m). This is essentially the diameter of the laser beam, or the length of the interaction region defined by the experiment.

* $\bar{v}$ is again the mean thermal speed of the atoms (meters per second). We use $\bar{v}$ here as a typical speed for an atom crossing the beam. One might also consider the component of velocity perpendicular to the beam for transit time, but for an order-of-magnitude estimate, average speed is often used if the beam is crossed by atoms moving in various directions or if we are considering interaction along the beam for co-propagating atoms. Let's assume for now this $\bar{v}$ refers to a relevant speed for traversing L_{beam}.

Now we have two timescales:

T: average time between collisions*. τ_c: average time the atom spends in the laser beam*.

The interplay between these two timescales defines **Two Regimes** for the effect of VCCs:

1. $T \gg \tau_\mathrm{c}$ (Collisions Rare During Interaction).

This means $T \gg \tau_\mathrm{c}$. The average time between collisions (T) is much longer than the time the atom spends interacting with the laser (τ_c). In this case, an atom is very likely to enter the laser beam, interact with it, and exit the beam *without suffering any velocity-changing collisions* during its transit. The consequence is: **Minimal mixing between velocity slices leads to negligible additional broadening.**

If an atom starts in a particular velocity slice v_z when it enters the beam, it will most likely stay in that same velocity slice throughout its interaction. So, the laser interacts with a "pure" velocity subgroup. VCCs don't have enough time to shuffle atoms between velocity subgroups *while they are being observed by the laser*.

In this regime, if you are doing, for example, saturation spectroscopy, the "hole" you burn in a velocity subgroup will remain "clean" for the duration of the interaction. The resolution of Doppler-free techniques will be limited primarily by the homogeneous width Γ_h (from natural lifetime, phase-perturbing collisions that might still occur faster than T if T is for VCCs, and transit time broadening related to τ_c itself), but not significantly smeared out by VCCs.

Page 31:

Now for the second regime, contrasting with the previous one:

2. Capital T is much less than τ_c (Frequent Collisions). This means $T \ll \tau_\text{c}$. The average time between collisions (T) is now much *shorter* than the time the atom spends interacting with the laser (τ_c). This implies that an atom, while it is traversing the laser beam, will typically undergo *many* velocity-changing collisions.

The consequence is: **Slices get re-populated, shortening effective resonance time which leads to extra homogeneous broadening observed.** Let's unpack this carefully.

"Slices get re-populated": An atom that was initially in resonance with the laser (belonging to a specific v_z slice) might be knocked out of resonance by a VCC. Conversely, an atom that was *not* in resonance might be knocked *into* resonance. So, there's a constant shuffling of atoms into and out of the velocity subgroup that is resonant with the laser.

"Shortening effective resonance time": If an atom is only resonant with the laser for a short period T (the mean time between VCCs) before being knocked out of that velocity class, then T acts like a coherence time for that specific velocity-resonant interaction. Even if the atom is still in the beam for a longer time τ_c, it's only "talking to the laser" in that particular velocity channel for a time T.

"Extra homogeneous broadening observed": If the interaction time with a specific velocity class is limited to T, this leads to an additional broadening of the features observed in, for example, saturation spectroscopy. This broadening is often considered homogeneous because any atom, once in the resonant velocity class, has the same probability per unit time of being scattered out by a VCC. The VCC rate $\left(\frac{1}{T}\right)$ acts like another decay rate, adding to the homogeneous linewidth. So, the width of a Lamb dip, for instance, might become $\Gamma_h + \left(\approx \frac{1}{T}\right)$ if T is short enough. This is sometimes called "velocity diffusion broadening."

The three dashes indicate the end of this point. So, the ratio $\frac{T}{\tau_c}$ is critical. If $\frac{T}{\tau_c} \gg 1$ (low pressure, narrow beam), VCCs are less problematic for high-resolution spectroscopy. If $\frac{T}{\tau_c} \ll 1$ (high pressure, broad beam), VCCs can become a significant broadening mechanism, even for Doppler-free signals, effectively smearing out the very features we are trying to resolve.

Page 32

Slide 11: Spectroscopic Consequences

Now we move to **Slide 11: Spectroscopic Consequences** of these velocity-changing collisions. How do they manifest in different types of spectroscopic measurements?

1. Doppler-Limited (Conventional) Spectroscopy:

This refers to experiments where we are not trying to overcome Doppler broadening; we are just measuring the overall Doppler-broadened profile (like the Gaussian we saw). The slide says: **Velocity-changing collisions average out; overall Doppler width essentially unchanged.** This might seem counterintuitive at first. If VCCs are shuffling atoms between velocity groups, why doesn't it change the overall Doppler profile? Think of it this way: the Doppler profile is determined by the steady-state Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution of velocities. While individual atoms are jumping between v_z values, the *overall distribution* $f(v_\mathrm{z})$ remains the same in thermal equilibrium. For every atom that gets knocked out of a particular v_z slice, another atom (statistically) gets knocked into it. So, the shape of the envelope, the Gaussian Doppler profile, and its width $\Delta\omega_\mathrm{D}$, are primarily determined by temperature and mass, and are not strongly affected by the rate of VCCs (unless you get into extreme regimes like Dicke narrowing, which is a separate effect we'll come to). So, for standard absorption spectroscopy in a cell, VCCs don't typically change the observed Doppler width.

2. Doppler-Free Methods (e.g., Saturation Spectroscopy):

This is where VCCs have a much more direct and often detrimental impact. **VCC can blur the narrow “hole” or “peak” dug into a velocity subgroup, reducing resolution.** In saturation spectroscopy, we use a pump beam to selectively modify the population of a narrow velocity subgroup ($v_\mathrm{z} \approx 0$ for Lamb dips). This creates a "hole" in the population of the ground state for that v_z, or a "peak" in the excited state population. A probe beam then detects this sharp feature, whose width should ideally be the homogeneous width Γ_h. However, if VCCs are frequent (i.e., T is short), an atom that was part of the saturated "hole" can be scattered out of that $v_\mathrm{z} = 0$ subgroup into a $v_\mathrm{z} \neq 0$ subgroup. Conversely, an unsaturated atom from $v_\mathrm{z} \neq 0$ can be scattered into the $v_\mathrm{z} = 0$ subgroup, "refilling" the hole. This "spectral diffusion" due to VCCs effectively broadens the observed saturation feature. The hole is no longer as sharp or as deep as it would be without VCCs. This reduces the resolution of the Doppler-free measurement and can make it harder to extract the true Γ_h. The broadening effect is, as discussed, roughly $1/T_{VCC}$ where T_{VCC} is the mean time between velocity-changing collisions.

3. Line-Shape Diagnosis:

Understanding VCCs can also be used as a tool.

Page 33:

Continuing with spectroscopic consequences, specifically under Line-Shape Diagnosis:

Line-shape fitting or pump-probe timing can quantify VCC rates. Since VCCs affect the shapes of Doppler-free signals (e.g., they make Lamb dips broader and more "rounded" at the bottom, or affect the recovery of a transient grating), careful analysis of these line shapes can allow one to extract information about the VCCs themselves. For instance, by modeling the effect of velocity diffusion on a saturation spectrum and fitting it to experimental data obtained at different pressures (which changes the VCC rate), one can determine collision cross-sections for VCCs. Similarly, time-resolved pump-probe experiments can directly observe the "filling in" of a velocity-selected population hole due to VCCs, allowing a measurement of the VCC rate $(1/T)$.

4. Practical Mitigation: If VCCs are detrimental to your high-resolution experiment, what can you do about them? **Lower buffer-gas pressure or use atomic beams to reduce collision frequency.** This is straightforward. Since collisions cause VCCs, reducing the collision rate will mitigate their effects.

* **Lower buffer-gas pressure:** The mean free path Λ is inversely proportional to pressure. Lowering the pressure increases Λ, which increases the mean time between collisions T. If T becomes much longer than the interaction time τ_c, VCC effects are minimized. This is why many high-resolution gas-phase experiments are done at low pressures. * **Use atomic beams:** In an atomic beam, atoms travel in a relatively collision-free environment (especially in a good vacuum). By crossing an atomic beam with a laser beam (often perpendicularly to minimize residual Doppler

broadening along the beam), one can significantly reduce or eliminate VCCs during the interaction. This also has the benefit of reducing transit time if the beam is well-collimated. Many of the highest-precision measurements are done using atomic or molecular beams.

The three dashes suggest we're moving on to a related but distinct topic. The message here is that VCCs are a real concern for high-resolution spectroscopy, but their effects can be understood, quantified, and to some extent, controlled.

Page 34:

Now for a fascinating twist: **Slide 12: Dicke Narrowing — When Collisions *Reduce* Width.** This seems completely counterintuitive! We've spent all this time talking about how collisions *broaden* spectral lines (either homogeneously, or by enabling VCCs which can blur Doppler-free features). But here, under specific conditions, collisions can actually make a Doppler-broadened line *narrower*. This phenomenon is known as Dicke narrowing, after Robert H. Dicke who first predicted it.

1. Key Requirement:

The crucial condition for Dicke narrowing to occur is: $\Lambda < \lambda$

Or more precisely, often stated as $\Lambda \ll \frac{\lambda}{2\pi}$, meaning the mean free path is much smaller than $\frac{1}{k}$, where $k = \frac{2\pi}{\lambda}$ is the wave number. Let's use the slide's notation: $\Lambda < \lambda$, where $\lambda = \frac{2\pi}{k}$ is the laser wavelength. So, the mean free path of the atom between collisions must be smaller than (or comparable to) the wavelength of the radiation being absorbed or emitted. This condition implies a relatively high pressure or density of the gas, so that collisions are very frequent and the atom only travels a very short distance between them.

2. Physical Picture:

Frequent velocity randomisation confines phase accumulation which suppresses Doppler spread. Let's try to build intuition for this. The Doppler effect arises because an atom moves a significant distance (many wavelengths) *coherently* in one direction while interacting with the light wave, leading to a cumulative phase shift that we interpret as a frequency shift. Now, imagine the atom is undergoing very frequent velocity-changing collisions, such that its direction of motion is randomized on a length scale *shorter* than the wavelength of light. It's like the atom is taking a random walk, but each step of the walk is very small compared to λ. In this regime, the atom doesn't get a chance to build up a consistent Doppler shift in any one direction for very long. Its velocity v_{z} is rapidly changing, averaging out to near zero over the time it takes to effectively absorb or emit a photon (if that time is longer than many collision times). Because the atom's motion is now "diffusive" on the scale of a wavelength rather than "ballistic," it cannot maintain a large, coherent Doppler shift. The rapid changes in velocity effectively average out the Doppler broadening. The atom is "caged" by collisions, and its effective velocity for Doppler shifting purposes is much reduced.

This is a beautiful example of how motional effects can be dramatically altered by the collisional environment. The key is that the collisions are so frequent that they interrupt the *coherent accumulation of Doppler phase shift* over distances comparable to a wavelength.

Page 35:

Continuing with Dicke Narrowing:

3. Observable Effect:

Measured line becomes narrower than the naive Doppler width.

So, if you calculate the Doppler width $\Delta\omega_{\mathrm{D}}$ using the standard formula (from page 18) based on the temperature and mass, you might predict a certain Gaussian width. However, if you are in the Dicke narrowing regime ($\Lambda < \lambda$), the actual observed spectral line will be *narrower* than this predicted $\Delta\omega_{\mathrm{D}}$. It will still likely be broader than the homogeneous width Γ_{h}, but the Doppler contribution to its width is significantly reduced. The line shape in the Dicke-narrowed regime is often still approximately Lorentzian, but its width is now determined by a combination of the homogeneous width and a residual, much-reduced Doppler (or motional) width.

4. Applications:

This is not just a theoretical curiosity; Dicke narrowing has practical applications.

High-precision frequency standards in gas cells (e.g., Rubidium, Cesium clocks).

In some atomic clocks and frequency standards that use microwave transitions in gas cells, conditions can be achieved (e.g., by using a buffer gas at appropriate pressure) where Dicke narrowing is significant. These transitions are at much lower frequencies (longer wavelengths λ) than optical transitions, so the condition $\Lambda < \lambda$ can be easier to meet. By operating in the Dicke-narrowed regime, one can obtain sharper resonance lines than would be predicted by simple Doppler theory for that temperature, leading to improved stability and accuracy of the frequency standard. The buffer gas, in this case, plays a dual role: it helps to confine the atoms to the interaction region for longer (reducing transit time broadening) and it causes the Dicke narrowing of the Doppler profile.

So, Dicke narrowing is a striking example of how the interplay between atomic motion, collisions, and the wavelength of light can lead to unexpected and useful spectroscopic phenomena. It shows that our simple pictures sometimes need refinement when we enter different physical regimes.

Page 36:

This page provides a graph titled **Comparison: Doppler Broadening vs. Dicke Narrowing.** This visual should help solidify the concept.

Let's describe the graph:

The horizontal axis is Frequency Detuning ($\Delta\nu$). So, this is likely ordinary frequency ν, not angular frequency ω. The center is at 0 detuning.

The vertical axis is **Intensity.** The peaks are normalized to 1.

There are two curves shown:

1. A **broad, blue curve** labeled **"Doppler Broadened."** This is the standard Gaussian profile that we expect from the Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution of velocities in the absence of Dicke narrowing (i.e., when $\Lambda \gg \lambda$). It has a certain FWHM, indicated schematically by a horizontal blue line segment across the peak at half maximum.

2. A **narrower, orange-red curve** labeled **"Dicke Narrowed."** This curve is shown centered at the same position (0 detuning) but is significantly narrower than the blue Doppler-broadened curve. Its FWHM, also indicated by a horizontal line segment, is clearly smaller. This represents the line shape observed when collisions are frequent enough ($\Lambda < \lambda$) to average out much of the Doppler effect.

What this graph tells us:

It vividly illustrates the effect of Dicke narrowing. Under conditions favorable for Dicke narrowing (typically higher pressure of a buffer gas), the observed spectral line is significantly sharper than what you would expect from the gas temperature alone. The collisions, instead of just broadening the line, have effectively "suppressed" a large part of the inhomogeneous Doppler broadening.

The Dicke narrowed line will still have some width, which will be a combination of the true homogeneous width (natural + pressure broadening from phase/amplitude perturbing collisions) and a residual motional width that depends on the diffusion coefficient of the atoms in the gas. But it's demonstrably narrower than the full Doppler width.

This is a powerful visual confirmation that not all collisions are bad for resolution!

Page 37:

Slide 13: Summary & Next Steps

* **Recognised homogeneous mechanisms (natural, inelastic, elastic collisions) lead to Lorentzian profiles with width $\mathit{\Gamma}$**. This is our first major takeaway. Homogeneous broadening arises from processes that affect every atom in the ensemble in the same way. The quintessential example is the natural lifetime limit due to spontaneous emission. Inelastic (quenching) collisions that shorten the state lifetime, and elastic (phase-perturbing) collisions that interrupt the coherence of the radiation process, also contribute to homogeneous broadening. The characteristic line shape for these mechanisms is the Lorentzian, and its Full Width at Half Maximum is denoted by $\mathit{\Gamma}$ (or $\mathit{\Gamma}_{\mathrm{h}}$ for homogeneous).

* **Recognised inhomogeneous mechanism (thermal Doppler) leads to Gaussian profile with width $\mathit{\Delta}\omega_{\mathrm{D}}$**. The second major takeaway. Inhomogeneous broadening occurs when different atoms (or subgroups of atoms) in the ensemble have different resonant frequencies. The prime example in gas-phase spectroscopy is Doppler broadening, arising from the thermal motion of atoms and the Maxwell-Boltzmann distribution of their velocities. This leads to an overall observed line shape that is typically Gaussian, with a FWHM denoted by $\mathit{\Delta}\omega_{\mathrm{D}}$ ($\mathit{\Delta}\omega_{\mathrm{D}}$ for Doppler). Each point under this Gaussian envelope can be thought of as comprising a "homogeneous packet" of atoms from a specific velocity class.

* **Velocity-changing collisions (VCCs) bridge the two pictures; their influence depends on $\frac{T}{\tau_{\mathrm{c}}}$**. VCCs are collisions that change an atom's velocity, thereby moving it from one Doppler-shifted subgroup to another.

They "bridge" the homogeneous and inhomogeneous pictures because they involve atoms that have an intrinsic homogeneous lineshape but are being shuffled around within the inhomogeneous Doppler distribution.

The impact of VCCs depends critically on the ratio of two timescales: T, the mean time between VCCs, and τ_{c}, the interaction time of the atom with the laser field (e.g., transit time through the beam).

If $T \gg \tau_{\text{c}}$ (collisions rare during interaction), VCCs have minimal effect on Doppler-free signals.

If $T \ll \tau_{\text{c}}$ (collisions frequent during interaction), VCCs can broaden Doppler-free features, effectively adding to the observed homogeneous width by an amount related to $\frac{1}{T}$, due to spectral diffusion.

This summary neatly captures the core concepts we've covered.

Page 38:

Continuing with the summary and looking forward:

The slide mentions: **In special high-pressure, short-path regimes, collisions can even narrow lines (Dicke).** This is the fascinating Dicke narrowing effect we just discussed. When the mean free path Λ becomes smaller than the radiation wavelength λ, frequent velocity-changing collisions no longer just broaden or shuffle, but they actually confine the atom's motion in such a way that the effective Doppler broadening is *reduced*. So, this is a special case where VCCs have a narrowing effect on the *overall Doppler profile*.

Finally, an **Upcoming topic: Saturation Spectroscopy — exploiting population dynamics to circumvent Doppler broadening and directly measure** Γ. This is a perfect lead-in to one of the most important techniques in laser spectroscopy. We've talked about how Doppler broadening (an inhomogeneous effect) often masks the much narrower homogeneous linewidth Γ. Saturation spectroscopy is a clever, nonlinear optical technique that uses a strong "pump" laser to selectively modify the populations of a specific velocity subgroup within the Doppler profile (typically the $v_\mathrm{z} = 0$ group when using counter-propagating beams). A weak "probe" laser then detects this population change. The resulting signal (e.g., a Lamb dip) can have a width close to the homogeneous width $\varGamma$, effectively eliminating the Doppler broadening.

This allows us to: 1. Perform very high-resolution spectroscopy, resolving features that would be completely obscured by the Doppler width. 2. Directly measure $\varGamma$, the homogeneous linewidth, which gives us information about natural lifetimes, collisional relaxation rates (both inelastic and phase-perturbing), and other broadening mechanisms like power broadening or transit-time broadening.

So, understanding the distinction between homogeneous (Lorentzian, width $\varGamma$) and inhomogeneous (Gaussian/Doppler, width $\varDelta\omega_\mathrm{D}$) broadening, and the role of VCCs, is absolutely essential background for appreciating the power and principles of techniques like saturation spectroscopy.

The three dashes indicate the end of this lecture segment. This has been a comprehensive overview of line broadening mechanisms, and I trust it provides a solid foundation for our upcoming discussions on advanced laser spectroscopy techniques.