

## Feasibility and physics potential of detecting $^8\text{B}$ solar neutrinos at JUNO

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The Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory (JUNO) features a 20 kt multi-purpose underground liquid scintillator sphere as its main detector. In this talk we describe in detail a comprehensive assessment of JUNO's potential for detecting  $^8\text{B}$  solar neutrinos via the neutrino-electron elastic scattering process. A reduced 2 MeV threshold for the recoil electron energy is achievable with optimized background reduction strategies. With ten years of data taking, about 60,000 signal and 30,000 background events are expected. This leads to a simultaneous measurement of  $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$  and  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  using reactor antineutrinos and solar neutrinos in the JUNO detector. This large sample will enable an examination of the distortion of the recoil electron spectrum that is dominated by the neutrino flavor transformation in the dense solar matter. If  $\Delta m_{21}^2 = 4.8 \times 10^{-5} (7.5 \times 10^{-5} eV^2)$ , JUNO can provide evidence of neutrino oscillation in the Earth at approximately the  $3\sigma$  ( $2\sigma$ ) level by measuring the non-zero signal rate variation with respect to the solar zenith angle. Moreover, JUNO can simultaneously measure  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  using  $^8\text{B}$  solar neutrinos to a precision of 20% or better, depending on the central value, and to sub-percent precision using reactor antineutrinos. A comparison of these two measurements from the same detector will help understand the current mild inconsistency between the value of reported by solar neutrino experiments and the KamLAND experiment.

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## 1. Introduction

Solar neutrinos, produced during nuclear fusion in the solar core, have played an important role in the history of neutrino physics. The standard scenario of three neutrino mixing predicts a smooth upturn in the survival probability ( $P_{ee}$ ) in the neutrino energy region between the high (MSW dominated) and low (vacuum dominated) ranges, and a sizable Day-Night asymmetry at the percentage level. The combined Super-K and SNO fitting favors  $\Delta m_{21}^2 = 4.8 \times 10^{-5} \text{ eV}^2$  [1], while KamLAND gives  $\Delta m_{21}^2 = 7.53 \times 10^{-5} \text{ eV}^2$  [2]. From the latest results at the Neutrino 2020 conference [3], the inconsistency is reduced from  $2\sigma$  to around  $1.4\sigma$  due to the larger statistics and the update of analysis methods.

Determining whether this inconsistency is a statistical fluctuation or a physical effect beyond the standard neutrino oscillation framework requires further measurements. The Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory (JUNO), a 20 kt multi-purpose underground liquid scintillator (LS) detector, can simultaneously measure  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  using  $^8\text{B}$  solar neutrinos reactor antineutrinos. The analysis threshold for the recoil electrons can be decreased to 2 MeV, assuming an achievable intrinsic radioactivity background level and better muon veto strategies. The lower threshold leads to larger signal statistics and a more sensitive examination of the spectrum distortion of recoil electrons. New measurement of the non-zero signal rate variation versus the solar zenith angle (Day-Night asymmetry) is also expected. After combining with the  $^8\text{B}$  neutrino flux from the SNO NC measurement, the  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  precision is expected to be similar to the current global fitting results [4].

## 2. Solar neutrino detection at JUNO

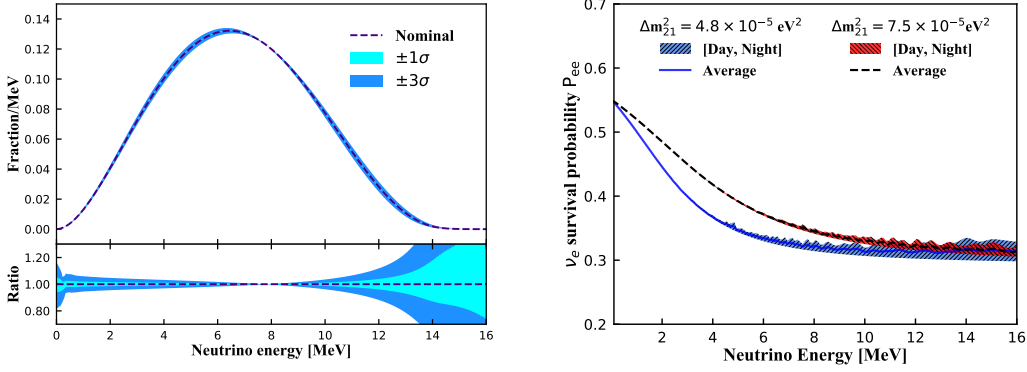
In LS detectors, the primary detection channel for solar neutrinos is their elastic scattering with electrons. In this study, we assume an arrival  $^8\text{B}$  neutrino flux of  $(5.25 \pm 0.20) \times 10^6 / \text{cm}^2 / \text{s}$  provided by the NC channel measurement at SNO [5]. The  $^8\text{B}$  neutrino spectra and shape uncertainties are taken from Refs. [6, 7] as shown in the left figure 1. Taking the MSW effects in both the Sun and the Earth into consideration, the  $\nu_e$  survival probabilities ( $P_{ee}$ ) with respect to the neutrino energy for the two  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  values are shown in the right figure 1.

After scattering, the total energy and momentum of the neutrino and electron are redistributed. The expected signal rate in the full energy range is 4.15 (4.36) counts per day per kt (cpd/kt) for  $\Delta m_{21}^2 = 4.8(7.5) \times 10^{-5} \text{ eV}^2$ .

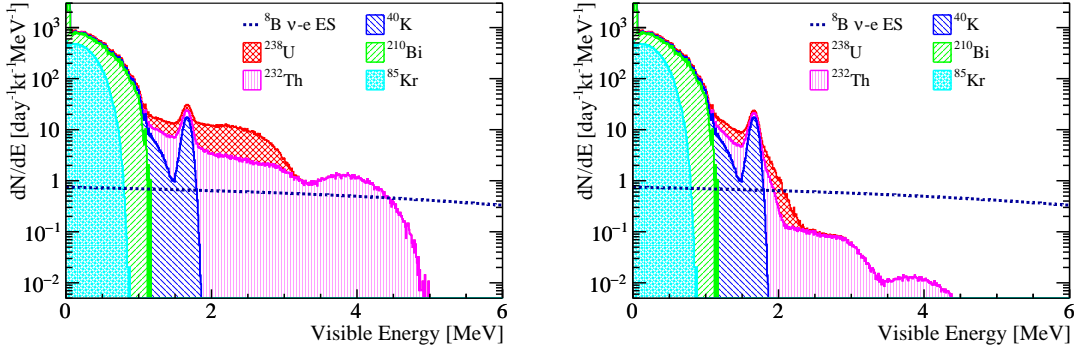
## 3. Background budget

### 3.1 Internal radioactivity

As a feasibility study, we start with  $10^{-17} \text{ g/g}$  U and Th in the secular equilibrium, which are close to those of Borexino Phase I [8]. The top plot of figure 2 shows the internal background spectrum under the assumptions above. The background can be further reduced by the time, space, and energy correlation from the Bi-Po/Bi-Tl cascade decays, and the results are shown in the bottom plot of figure 2.



**Figure 1:** Left:  $^8\text{B}$   $\nu_e$  spectrum together with the shape uncertainties. The data are taken from Ref.[26]. Right: Solar  $\nu_e$  survival probabilities ( $P_{ee}$ ) with respect to the neutrino energy. The shadowed area shows the variation of at different solar zenith angles.



**Figure 2:** Internal radioactivity background compared with  $^8\text{B}$  signal before (left) and after (right) time, space, and energy correlation cuts to remove the Bi-Po/Bi-Tl cascade decays.

### 3.2 External radioactivity

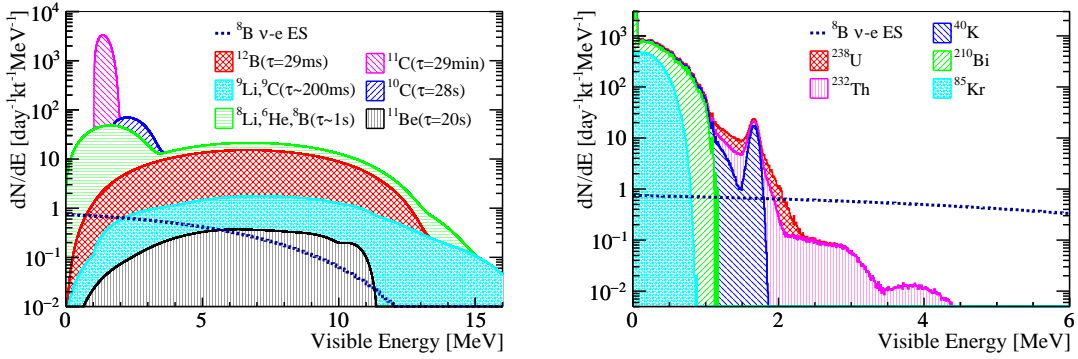
All detector materials at JUNO have been carefully selected to fulfill radiopurity requirements. With the measured radioactivity values, a simulation is performed to obtain the external deposited energy spectrum in the LS. According to the simulation results, an energy dependent fiducial volume (FV) cut, in terms of the reconstructed radial position ( $r$ ) in the spherical coordinate system, is designed as follows:

- $2 < E_{\text{vis}} \leq 3$  MeV,  $r < 13$  m, 7.9 kt target mass;
- $3 < E_{\text{vis}} \leq 5$  MeV,  $r < 15$  m, 12.2 kt target mass;
- $E_{\text{vis}} > 5$  MeV,  $r < 16.5$  m, 16.2 kt target mass.

In this way, the external radioactivity background is suppressed to less than 0.5% compared with the signals in the entire energy range, while the signal statistics are maximized at high energies.

### 3.3 Cosmogenic isotopes

The relatively shallow vertical rock overburden, approximately 680 m, leads to a 0.0037 Hz/m muon flux, with an averaged energy of 209 GeV. The direct consequence is approximately 3.6 Hz muons passing through the LS target. More than 10,000  $^{11}\text{C}$  isotopes are generated per day, which constrains the analysis threshold to 2 MeV, as shown in figure 3. Based on the simulation and measurements of previous experiments, it is found that other isotopes can be suppressed to a 1% level with a cylindrical veto along the muon track and the Three-Fold Coincidence cut (TFC) among the muon, the spallation neutron capture, and the isotope decay.



**Figure 3:** Cosmogenic background before (left) and after veto (right). The isotope yields shown here are scaled from the KamLAND's [48] and Borexino's measurements [49]. The huge amount of  $^{11}\text{C}$  constrains the analysis threshold to 2 MeV. The others isotopes can be well suppressed with veto strategies discussed in the text.

## 4. Expected results

After applying all the selection cuts, about 60,000 recoil electrons and 30,000 background events are expected in 10 years of data taking as shown in figure 4.

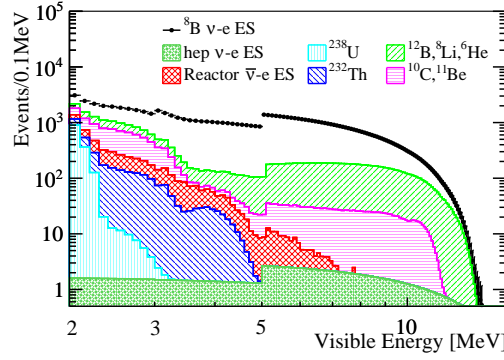
### 4.1 Spectrum distortion test

A background-subtracted Asimov data set is produced in the standard LMA-MSW framework using different  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  values, shown as the black dots and red line in the left figure 5. We would like to test an energy-independent hypothesis, where the  $P_{ee}$  is assumed as a flat value for neutrino energies larger than 2 MeV. This hypothesis is rejected at  $2.7\sigma$  with  $\Delta m_{21}^2 = 7.5 \times 10^{-5} \text{ eV}^2$ .

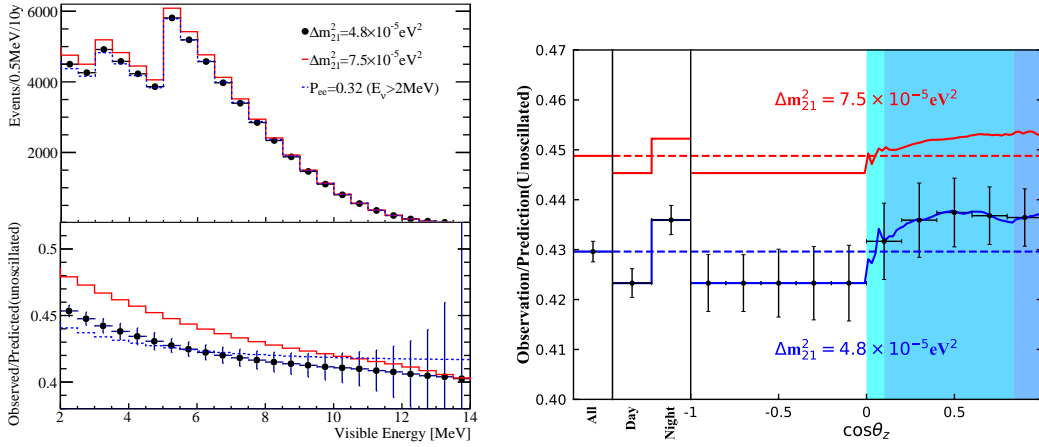
### 4.2 Day-Night asymmetry

Solar neutrino propagation through the Earth is expected, via the MSW effect, to cause signal rate variation versus the solar zenith angle. This rate variation observable also provides additional sensitivity to the  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  value, as shown in the right figure 5. The variation is quantified by defining the Day-Night asymmetry as:

$$A_{DN} = \frac{R_D - R_N}{(R_D + R_N)/2}, \quad (1)$$



**Figure 4:** Expected signal and background spectra in ten years of data taking, with all selection cuts and muon veto methods applied.

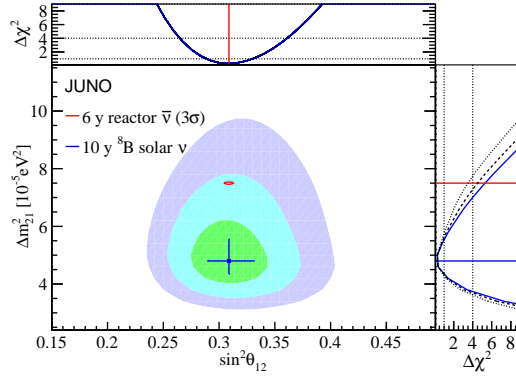


**Figure 5:** Left: Background subtracted spectra produced in the standard LMA-MSW framework for two  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  values (black dots and red line, respectively), and the  $P_{ee} = 0.32$  ( $E_\nu > 2$  MeV) assumption (blue line). Their comparison with the no flavor conversion is shown in the bottom panel. Right: Ratio of  $^8\text{B}$  neutrino signals produced in the standard LMA-MSW framework to the no-oscillation prediction at different solar zenith angles.

where  $R_D$  and  $R_N$  are the background-subtracted signal rates during the Day ( $\cos \theta_z < 0$ ) and Night ( $\cos \theta_z > 0$ ), respectively. Compared with Super-Kamiokande's results from Ref. [1], JUNO could reach the same precision of  $A_{DN}$  in less than 10 years.

### 4.3 Measurement of oscillation parameters

As mentioned above, in the standard neutrino oscillation framework,  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  can be measured using the information in the spectra distortion and the signal rate variation versus solar zenith angle. With ten years of data taking the expected sensitivity of  $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$  and  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  is shown in Fig. 6.



**Figure 6:** 68.3%, 95.5%, and 99.7% C.L. allowed regions in the  $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$  and  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  plane using the  $^8\text{B}$  solar neutrino in ten years data taking. The one-dimensional  $\Delta\chi^2$  for  $\sin^2 \theta_{12}$  and  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  are shown in the top and right panels, respectively.

## 5. Summary

The JUNO experiment, with a 20 kt LS detector, can shed light on the current inconsistency between  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  values measured using solar neutrinos and reactor antineutrinos. A set of energy-dependent FV cuts is newly designed based on comprehensive background studies, leading to the maximized target mass with negligible external background. A set of distance-dependent veto time cuts are developed for the cylindrical veto along the muon track, resulting in a significantly improved signal to background ratio. In the standard three-flavor neutrino oscillation framework, the spectrum distortion and the Day-Night asymmetry lead to a  $\Delta m_{21}^2$  measurement of  $4.8^{+0.8}_{-0.5}$  ( $7.5^{+1.6}_{-1.2}$ )  $\times 10^{-5}$   $\text{eV}^2$ , with a similar precision to the current solar global fitting result. Details of this study can be found in [9].

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