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On latency of multiple zonal jets in the oceans. (English) Zbl 1241.76427
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Summary: Most of the nearly zonal, multiple, alternating jets observed in the oceans are latent, that is, their amplitudes are weak relative to the ambient mesoscale eddies. Yet, relatively strong jets are often observed in dynamical simulations. To explore mechanisms controlling the degree of latency, we analyse solutions of an idealized, eddy-resolving and flat-bottom quasigeostrophic model, in which dynamically generated mesoscale eddies maintain and interact with a set of multiple zonal jets. We find that the degree of the latency is controlled primarily by the bottom friction: the larger the friction parameter, the more latent are the jets; and the degree of the latency is substantial for a realistic range of the oceanic bottom friction coefficient. This result not only provides a plausible explanation for the latency of the oceanic jets, but it may also be relevant to the prominent atmospheric multiple jets observed on giant gas planets, such as Jupiter. We hypothesize that these jets can be so strong because of the relative absence of the bottom friction. The mechanism controlling the latency in our solutions is understood in terms of the changes induced in the linear eigenmodes of the time-mean flow by varying the bottom friction coefficient; these changes, in turn, affect and modify the jets. Effects of large Reynolds numbers on the eddies, jets, and the latency are also discussed.

MSC:

[76U05](#) General theory of rotating fluids

[86A05](#) Hydrology, hydrography, oceanography

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[geostrophic turbulence](#); [quasi-geostrophic flows](#); [waves in rotating fluids](#)

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