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STUDY ON TEMPERING EFFECTS IN
GAS CARBURIZED LOW CARBON STEEL

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This dissertation is submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of
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GAS CARBURIZED LOW CARBON STEEL

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“I declare that this report is done by my own exclude the citation with the mentioned references for each.”

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ABSTRACT

The hardness and compression stress of AISI 1020 steel surface improved by various heat treatments such as carburizing and tempering were tested. Samples prepared from the test materials were treated at gases carburizing medium and then tempered. The hardness and compression distribution were measured. According to ASTM E9-89a standard, the specimen was fabricated with length to diameter ratio of 2.0 and the surface must be flattening to proceed the compression test. The hardness and compression strength of AISI 1020 were determined and compared with other treated steel samples. Rockwell hardness testing machine was used to obtain the hardness value based on ASTM E18-03 standard and compression testing was conducted using Universal Testing Machine (UTM) to measure the compression strength based on ASTM E9-89a standard. The hardness of carburized steel was not as expected. Compression strength results are increased after the treatment with very minimal values.

ABSTRAK

Kekerasan dan tekanan mampatan pada permukaan AISI 1020 ditingkatkan oleh pelbagai rawatan haba seperti penyusukkarbonan dan pewajaan. Bahan-bahan ujian disediakan untuk dirawat di dalam penyusukkarbonan menggunakan gas dan pewajaan. Kekerasan dan pendedaran mampatan diukur. Berdasarkan piawaian ASTM E9-89a, spesimen difabrikasi mengikut nisbah panjang kepada diameter 2.0 dan permukaan mestilah diratakan untuk meneruskan ujian mampatan. Kekerasan dan kekuatan mampatan AISI 1020 yang diukur dan dibandingkan antara keluli lain yang dirawat. Mesin ujian kekerasan Rockwell digunakan untuk memperoleh nilai kekerasan berdasarkan piawaian ASTM E18-03 dan ujian mampatan menggunakan Mesin Ujian Universal (UTM) untuk mengukur kekuatan mampatan berdasarkan piawaian E9-89a. Kekerasan keluli yang telah ditusuk karbon tidak mengikut keputusan yang dijangka. Keputusan kekuatan mampatan adalah bertambah selepas menjalani rawatan dengan nilai yang minima.

CONTENT

CHAPTER	ITEM	PAGE
	DECLARATION	ii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
	ABSTRACT	iv
	<i>ABSTRAK</i>	v
	CONTENT	vi
	LIST OF TABLE	x
	LIST OF FIGURE	xii
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xiv
CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Background	1
	1.2 Objective	3
	1.3 Scope	3
	1.4 Problem statement	3
CHAPTER 2	LITERATURE REVIEW	4
	2.1 Heat treatment	4
	2.2 Surface hardening	5
	2.3 Carburizing	6
	2.3.1 Carburizing media	10
	2.3.2 Carrier gases	12

CHAPTER	ITEM	PAGE
	2.3.3 Gas carburizing furnaces	13
	2.3.4 Advantages of gas carburizing	14
	2.3.5 Disadvantages of gas carburizing	15
2.4	Tempering	15
2.5	Normalizing	17
2.6	Carbon steel	18
	2.6.1 Low carbon steel	20
2.7	Mechanical testing	22
2.8	Hardness testing	23
	2.8.1 Brinell hardness test	24
	2.8.2 Rockwell hardness test	26
2.9	Compression test	29
2.10	Statistical analysis	30
	2.10.1 Hypothesis testing	30
CHAPTER 3	METHODOLOGY	32
3.1	Material	32
3.2	Specimen preparation	33
3.3	Heat treatment	36
	3.3.1 Gas carburizing	38
	3.3.2 Carbon monoxide properties	40
	3.3.3 Tempering	41
	3.3.4 Normalizing	41
3.4	Hardness test	42
3.5	Compression test	43
	3.5.1 Compression procedures	45
3.6	Statistical analysis	46

CHAPTER	ITEM	PAGE
CHAPTER 4	RESULT AND ANALYSIS	48
	4.1 Mechanical properties of group A	48
	4.1.1 Hardness test	48
	4.1.2 Compression test	49
	4.2 Mechanical properties of group B	50
	4.2.1 Hardness test	50
	4.2.2 Compression test	51
	4.3 Mechanical properties of group C	52
	4.3.1 Hardness test	52
	4.3.2 Compression test	53
	4.4 Statistical analysis	53
	4.5 Comparison of hardness and compression value between group A and B	54
	4.5.1 Hardness value	54
	4.5.2 Compression value	56
	4.6 Comparison of hardness and compression value between group A and C	59
	4.6.1 Hardness value	59
	4.6.2 Compression value	61
	4.7 Comparison of hardness and compression value between group B and C	64
	4.7.1 Hardness value	64
	4.7.2 Compression value	66
	4.8 Analysis summary	69
CHAPTER 5	DISCUSSION	70
	5.1 Comparison of hardness value	70
	5.2 Comparison of compression value	71
	5.3 Discussion	73
CHAPTER 6	CONCLUSION	76

CHAPTER	ITEM	PAGE
CHAPTER 7	RECOMMENDATION	77
	REFERENCES	78
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	81
	APPENDIX A	82
	APPENDIX B	87

LIST OF TABLES

NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Carrier gases used in gas carburizing (Sources: Prabhudev, K. H. 2000)	12
2.2	Composition, properties and uses of carbon steels (Sources: Rajput, R. K. 2000)	19
2.3	Comparison of low carbon steel and high carbon steel (Sources: Rajput, R. K. 2000)	21
2.4	The important mechanical tests information about metals and alloys. (Sources: Rajput, R. K. 2000)	22
2.5	Description of standard Rockwell hardness scales (Sources: Totten, G. E. 2007)	28
2.6	The criminal court situation (Sources: Vining, G.G. 1998)	31
3.1	Composition of nonresulfurized plain carbon steel (Sources: (Chapman, W. W. 2004)	32
3.2	Length to diameter ratio for compressive yield strength (Sources: ASTM E9-89a 2000)	33
3.3	Groups of specimens	36
3.4	LT Furnace specification	39
3.5	Carbon monoxide properties (Sources: Raub, J. (1977))	40
3.6	Specification of Rockwell hardness testing machine	42
3.7	UTM machine specification	44

NO.	TITLE	PAGE
4.1	Hardness value for group A	49
4.2	Compression value for group A	49
4.3	Hardness value for group B	50
4.4	Compression value for group B	51
4.5	Hardness value for group C	52
4.6	Compression value for group C	53
4.7	Comparison of hardness value between group A and B	54
4.8	Comparison of compression value between group A and B	56
4.9	Comparison of hardness value between group A and C	59
4.10	Comparison of compression value between group A and C	61
4.11	Comparison of hardness value between group B and C	64
4.12	Comparison of compression value between group B and C	66
4.13	Summary of analysis result	69

LIST OF FIGURES

NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Carburizing of low carbon steel to produce a high resistance surface (Sources: Askeland, D. R. 1994)	7
2.2	Dimension of Brinell indenter and indention (Sources: Smith, W. F. 2004)	24
2.3	Rockwell indenter (Sources: Smith, W. F. 2004)	26
2.4	Principle of the Rockwell hardness test (Sources: Nayar, A. 2005)	27
2.5	Column action (Sources: Horath, L. 2001)	29
3.1	(a) Bend saw (b) Conventional lathe machine	34
3.2	(a) Specimen dimension (b) Fabricated specimen	34
3.3	Process flow	35
3.4	Specimen process flow	37
3.5	Graph of overall heat treatment process	37
3.6	(a) Gas carburizing furnace (b) View inside the furnace	38
3.7	Specimens arrangement inside the furnace	39
3.8	(a) Rockwell hardness testing machine (b) V-groove anvil	42
3.9	Universal Testing Machine (UTM)	44

NO	TITLE	PAGE
3.10	(a) Specimen before tested	46
	(b) Specimen after tested	
3.11	Flow of hypothesis test (Sources: Kreyszig, 1999)	47
4.1	σ_A and σ_B at H_0 area for hardness value	55
4.2	t at H_1 area for hardness value of group A and B	56
4.3	σ_A and σ_B at H_0 area for compression value	57
4.4	t at H_0 area for compression value of group A and B	58
4.5	σ_A and σ_C at H_0 area for hardness value	60
4.6	t at H_1 area for hardness value of group A and C	61
4.7	σ_A and σ_C at H_0 area for compression value	62
4.8	t at H_1 area for compression value of group A and C	63
4.9	σ_B and σ_C at H_0 area for hardness value	65
4.10	t at H_1 area for hardness value of group B and C	66
4.11	σ_B and σ_C at H_0 area for compression value	67
4.12	t at H_0 area for compression value of group A and B	68
5.1	Graph of comparison of hardness value	70
5.2	Graph of comparison of compression value	71
5.3	Graph of compression testing	72
5.4	Iron-carbon binary –phase diagram (sources: Chapman, W.W. 2004)	73
5.5	Isothermal transformation diagram (Sources: Chapman, W. W. 2004)	74

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AISI	=	American Iron and Steel Institute
ASTM	=	American Standard Test Method
BHN	=	Brinell Hardness Number
C	=	Carbon
CH ₄	=	Methane
CNC	=	Computer Numerical Control
CO	=	Carbon monoxide
CO ₂	=	Carbon dioxide
C ₃ H ₈	=	Propane
Fe	=	Ferum
HRB	=	Rockwell B
HRC	=	Rockwell C
H ₂	=	Hydrogen
H ₂ O	=	Water
Mn	=	Manganese
SAE	=	Society of Automotive Engineering
UTM	=	Universal Testing Machine

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In many applications it is necessary to develop high surface hardness on a steel part that can resist wear and abrasion. So, the poor ductility and toughness cannot be tolerated throughout the entire part. Many rotating or sliding steel parts such as gears and shaft must have a hard outside case for wear resistance and tough inner core for fracture resistance. So the surface hardening method is one of the methods to overcome the problem.

Heat treatment defines as an operation or combination of operations, involving heating and cooling of a metal or alloy in its solid state with the object of changing the characteristics of the material (Rajput, R.K. 2000). There are several of the heat treatment processes. Some of the processes are surface hardening, tempering, quenching and normalizing.

Surface hardening processes may be divided into two specifications, those in which the composition of the surface materials must be changed and those in which the composition of the surface materials is not changed. Carburizing, nitriding, carbonitriding, and cyaniding process are used to satisfy the first specification (Chapman, W. W. 2004).

Carburizing is most widely used as a surface hardening process in general engineering and has been practiced for many years. Carburizing is a process in which an austenitized ferrous material is brought into contact with a carbonaceous atmosphere of sufficient carbon potential to cause absorption of carbon at the surface and, by diffusion, create a concentration gradient (Tomsic, J.L. and Hodder, R. 2000). The three basic methods of carburizing steel: pack carburizing, liquid carburizing and gas carburizing.

Gas carburizing is a surface hardening process in which steel or alloy suitable alternative composition is exposed at elevated temperature to a gaseous atmosphere with a high carbon potential; hardening of the resulting carbon-rich surface layer is accomplished by quenching the part from the carburizing temperature or by reheating and quenching (Tomsic, J.L. and Hodder, R. 2000).

Low carbon steel AISI 1020 is a cheap material, easy to find and widely used in manufacturing of simple construction and machine elements. Percentage of carbon contained in this steel is 18 to 23 percent. The surface properties of these steel are usually improved by carburizing (Selcuk, B., Ipek, R. and Karamis, M. B. 2003). It can be used as the automotive component as gear drives, pump shafts, guide bar and others.

In this study, gas carburizing process using carbon monoxide gases of the low carbon steel AISI 1020 will be carried out. Result of each testing is compared to define the differential strength of tempering effect using statistical analysis.

1.2 Objective

The objective of this research is to study and discuss the effects of tempering process on hardness and compression strength of gas carburized low carbon steel using statistical analysis.

1.3 Scope

The scope of this study is:

- a) To carry out carburizing treatment which is carburizing and normalizing, carburizing than proceed tempering and normalizing on low carbon steel using carbon monoxide gas.
- b) To carry out hardness and compression test on the material before and after treatment.
- c) To compare the data using statistical analysis in order to propose a better gas carburizing treatment process.

1.4 Problem statement

The problem statement in this study is:

- a) By the time moving, price of steel become increased. So, the machine and structural component become expensive.
- b) To produce cheaper component, low carbon steel are proposed to be used as its component. However, it requires good strength for safety.
- c) Heat treatment using gas carburizing is suggested to be the better way on increasing the hardness and strength of low carbon steels.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Heat treatment

Heat treatment defines as an operation or combination of operations, involving heating and cooling of a metal or alloy in its solid state with the object of changing the characteristics of the material. The purpose of the heat treatment are to improve the machinability, change or refine grain size, relieve the stress of the metal induced during cold or hot working, produce a hard surface on a ductile interior and improve mechanical properties like tensile strength, hardness, ductility, shock resistance and more. It also can improve the mechanical and electrical properties and increase resistance to wear, heat and corrosion (Rajput, R.K. 2000).

Heat treatment also can define as an operation or series of operation of heating and cooling a metal or alloy in the solid state to develop a specific desired properties or characteristics (Chapman, W. W. 2004).

There are two categories of thermal treatment which is those that increase the strength, hardness and toughness of steel by rapidly from above the transformation range and those that decrease hardness and promote uniformity either by cooling slowly from above the transformation range. Quenching and tempering was satisfied the first specification (Chapman, W. W. 2004).

2.2 Surface hardening

Surface hardening also referred as to case hardening. Surface hardening of carbon steel and iron is the most common form of introduction heat treatment because the heating can be localize to the areas where the metallurgical changes are desired (Totten, G. E. 2007).

The apparatus under consideration is used in the surface hardening of iron and steel part such as balls ad races of ball bearings, similar parts of roller bearing, many parts of automobiles, sewing machines and agricultural implements; links pins, bushings of silent chains, similar part as roller drive chains, automobile skid chains, cap screws, nuts, set screws and many such parts which in use are required to have a hard surface to resist wear (Totten, G. E. 2007).

Surface hardening involves one of four different method; carburizing, nitriding, cyaniding or carbonitriding. Surface hardening also know as case hardening. Case hardening is a term used to describe one or more process of hardening steel in which the outer portion or care is made substantially harder than the inner portion or core (Horath, L. 2001).

If a hard steel surface is desired, high carbon steel can be used or much cheaper low carbon steel can be heated in a carbonaceous atmosphere to increase the carbon content of the surface layers (Henkel, D. and Pense, A. W. 2002).

According to Akita, M. and Tokaji, K. (2006) study, he used modified gas carburizing which called pionite treatment at temperature below 773K for 35 hours in CO and H₂ gas mixture, and AISI 316 as the raw material. He found that hardness rapidly decreases with increasing the distance from the surface and then reaches a constant value of the hardness of the core material. It is also can be seen that the carburized specimen, tensile strength increases and ductility decreases compared with the untreated specimen, but the differences in tensile properties between the untreated and carburized specimens are small.

Most of the processes involve either enriching the surface layer with carbon and/or nitrogen, usually followed by quenching and tempering, or the selective hardening of the surface layer means of flame or induction hardening (Chapman, W. W. 2004). These case hardened pieces represent a compromise between the hard, wear resistance brittleness of high carbon steel and the softer, more ductile, less wear resistant low carbon steel (Rajput, R. K. 2000).

The objectives of the case hardening are to obtain a hard and wear resistance surface in machine part with enrichment of the surface layer with carbon to concentration of 0.75 percent to 1.2 percent. It also used to obtain tough core and close tolerances in machining part. Lastly, the objective of the case hardening is to obtain a higher fatigue limit and high mechanical properties in the core (Rajput, R. K. 2000).

2.3 Carburizing

Carburizing is a process in which an austenitized ferrous material is brought into contact with a carbonaceous atmosphere of sufficient carbon potential to cause absorption of carbon at the surface and, by diffusion, create concentration gradient (Tomsic, J. L. and Hodder, R. 2000). Carburizing is a heat treatment process to increase the surface hardness and wear resistance of components which are required to possess fairly good impact strength and resistance to wear service (Askeland, D. R. 1994).

Carburizing is accomplished by crowding considerable amounts of carbon into the outer surface of the steel as shown in figure 2.1. This can be done by placing the low carbon steel in a high carbon atmosphere and heating it into the red heat range 766 to 878°C (Horath, L. 2001).

As a result the carbon atoms are being absorbed on the steel surface and next diffuse into the core. The ability of carburizing atmosphere to release the carbon atoms as a result of thermal decomposition of the components of the atmosphere is very high and so is the carbon potential (Kula, P., Pietrasik, R. and Dybowski, K. 2005).

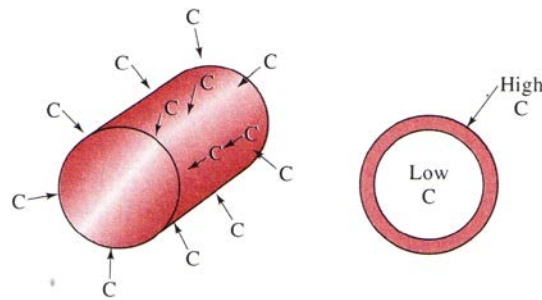


Figure 2.1: Carburizing of low carbon steel to produce a high resistance surface
(Sources: Askeland, D. R. (1994))

During carburizing, three important changes take place. First, the atomic carbon is liberated from carbonaceous medium. This takes place due to the decomposition of carbon monoxide into carbon dioxide and atomic carbon. The reaction of the carbon monoxide is shown in equation 2.1.



Secondly, the carbon atom from the carburizing agent is transferred to the surface of the steel. Thirdly, the carbon so absorbed by the surface of steel is diffused deep to it (Prabhudev, K. H. 2000).

The carbon diffusion process start once the carbon atoms reach the steel surface and diffuse interstitially into the low carbon content region. As the actual carbon concentration profile is formed by the diffusion of carbon atoms into the treated component (Li, S. and Manory, R. R. 1995). There are three basics methods of carburizing steel: pack carburizing, liquid carburizing and gas carburizing.