THE EFFECT OF HEAT TREATMENT ON THE MICROSTRUCTURE, MECHANICAL PROPERTIES AND DRY SLIDING WEAR BEHAVIOUR OF A356.O REINFORCED WITH GRAPHITE

Amith.D.Gangadhar¹, M.H. Annaiah², S. Linge Gowda³, T.G. Rajiv⁴, Harendra Kumar H.V⁵

P G student, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Acharya Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka, India¹
Professor and P G Coordinator, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Acharya Institute of Technology Bangalore, Karnataka, India²
Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Acharya Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka, India³
Assistant Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Acharya Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka, India⁴
P G student, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Acharya Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka, India⁵

ABSTRACT: In this study, A356.0 alloys were reinforced with varied percentage of Graphite by liquid metallurgy route, heat treated (T6) and tested for microstructure, mechanical properties. Wear tests were conducted using Pin-on-Disc apparatus at a constant sliding velocity of 1m/s and pressure of 0.35 MPa. Microstructure revealed uniform distribution of reinforcement in the matrix resulting in improved mechanical properties and wear resistance compared to un-reinforced material. The ceramic reinforced alloys were found to have improvement in mechanical properties and wear resistance compared to unreinforced alloy which may be attributed to the uniform distribution and improved bonding of reinforcement in the matrix.

Keywords: Composites, MMC’s, Microstructure, Mechanical behaviour, Heat treatment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Aluminium-Silicon alloys possess light weight, high specific strength and good heat transfer ability which make them suitable material to replace components made of ferrous alloys. Al-Si alloys are widely used in all types of IC engines such as cylinder blocks, cylinder heads and Pistons. They find applications in aircraft pump parts, aircraft structure and control parts, automotive transmission, aircraft fittings, water cooled cylinder blocks and nuclear energy installations. Both hypo-eutectic and hyper-eutectic alloys can be used as useful engine block materials on account of their adequate resistance and high strength to weight ratio. There are quite large numbers of studies made on the mechanical behavior of Al-Si alloys. Attempts are made to increase the strength of Al-Si-Mg by various manufacturing processes, heat treatment, reinforcement of hard and soft reinforcements etc.

In this paper, an attempt is made to study the effect of heat treatment on microstructure, mechanical properties and dry sliding wear behavior of Graphite reinforced A356.0.
II. MATERIALS

A356.0 alloys were reinforced with Graphite and were cast using liquid metallurgy route in the form of cylindrical bars of length 300mm and diameter 25mm. They were heat treated (T6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Weight %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Si</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mg</td>
<td>0.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fe</td>
<td>0.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cu</td>
<td>0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mn</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ni</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zinc</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al</td>
<td>Balance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI No</th>
<th>Alloy/Composite</th>
<th>Designation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A356.0</td>
<td>As cast A356.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>A356.0 +3% G</td>
<td>3G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>A356.0+5% G</td>
<td>5G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A356.0+10% G</td>
<td>10G</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III. TESTING

A: Microstructure

The samples for microstructure examination were prepared by following standard metallurgical procedures, etched in etchant prepared using 90 ml water, 4ml of HF, 4ml H2SO4 and 2g CrO3 and were examined using Optical Microscope.

Fig. 2.1 Microstructure of A356.0    Fig. 2.2 Microstructure of 3G
Fig. 2.3 Microstructure of G5     Fig. 2.4 Microstructure of G10

Figures 2.1 to 2.4 show the Microstructures of Heat treated A356.0 and its Composites depicting uniform distribution of ceramic reinforcement (Graphite).

B: Hardness test

The hardness tests were conducted as per ASTM E10 norms using Brinell hardness tester. Tests were performed at randomly selected points on the surface by maintaining sufficient spacing between indentations and distance from the edge of the specimen.
Table III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alloy Designation</th>
<th>Hardness (BHN)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A356.0</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3G</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5G</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10G</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.3.0: Hardness test specimens

Table III Shows the hardness values of A356.0 alloy and its composites. The hardness of 3G (3% Graphite) is found to be 97 compared to A356.0 alloy with hardness 57 indicating 70.17% increase in hardness. 5G (5% Graphite) has largest value of 98 indicating 71.9% increase in hardness and 10G has hardness of 77 indicating 35.08% increase in hardness when compared to A356.0.

C: Tension test

Table IV

Ultimate Tensile Strength (UTS) and ductility (elongation) of Heat treated A356.0 and its composites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alloy Designation</th>
<th>UTS in MPa</th>
<th>% Elongation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A356.0</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3G</td>
<td>277.73</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5G</td>
<td>246.88</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10G</td>
<td>195.54</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.3.2: Tensile test specimens

Table IV shows plot of UTS and % elongation values of A356.0 and its composites. It is clear from the table that UTS and Ductility increases with Graphite reinforcement for all composites such as G3, G5 and G10 compared to A356.0. G3 has highest UTS compared to A356.0 and it’s other composites. UTS of G3 is 277.73MPa which is 104.2% higher than UTS of A356.0. G10 has 195.54MPa showing 43.3% increase in strength. G5 has 246.88 showing 81.5% increase in strength. The Elongation of G3 is 3.60% which is 100% higher than that of A356.0. Composites G10 and G5 also have improved Ductility which are 102.2% and 42.2% respectively higher than A356.0.
D: Wear test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alloy Designation</th>
<th>Wear rate, gm/m x10^-5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sliding Distance, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As cast A356.0</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G5</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G10</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig.3.2 shows the plot of Wear rate versus sliding distance of A356.0 and its composites. A356.0 has Wear rate of 1.75x10^-5 gm/m where as G3 has 1.28x10^-5 showing 26.85% reduction in Wear rate. This reduction in wear rate may be attributed to the increase in hardness achieved due to uniform distribution and bonding of the ceramic in the composite. Composites G5 and G10 have wear rate 1.03x10^-5 gm/m and 1.58x10^-5 gm/m respectively. The decreased wear rate of G5 may be attributed to higher percentage of graphite in the composite which act as solid lubricant results in reducing wear rate.

IV. CONCLUSION

Microstructure indicates uniform distribution of ceramics in the matrix resulting in good bonding of the particulates. The composite with 5% Graphite has highest hardness. Composite with 10% Graphite has highest ductility. The composite with 3% Graphite has highest UTS. The composite with 5% Graphite has lesser wear rate when compared to A356.0 and it’s other composites.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

Mr. Amith D. Gangadhar obtained his B.E Mech from SIT, Tumkur, in 2009 and is a P.G student (M Tech Machine Design) at Acharya Institute of Technology, Bangalore. He is a Member of American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME).

M.H. Annaiah ME, MBA is working as Professor and PG Co-ordinator in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Acharya Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka. A double Post graduate in Engineering and Management science, Prof M.H.A. graduated in Mechanical Engineering from BMS College of Engineering, Bangalore in 1975, obtained M.E. (Machine Design) from University Visvesvaraya College of Engineering, Bangalore. He holds Life Time Membership of Indian Society for Technical Education (LMISTE). He has authored about 12 books in the field of Engineering such as Machine Design (reference book in NIT Jamshedpur), strength of materials, Engineering Drawing, Engineering Graphics and Computer Aided Engineering drawing (VTU reference book). He has number of publication in International journals. Prof M.H.A is former chairman (Board of Examiners) Bangalore University and is Research scholar at JNTU Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

Prof S. Linge Gowda B.E, M Tech (KREC) is working as Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Acharya Institute of Technology, Bangalore, Karnataka. He has worked as professor and HOD of Automobile Engineering of PES College of Engineering, Mandya, and Fellow Institution of Engineers (FIE). He is a Life member of Indian Society for Technical Education (LMISTE) and was chairman, Board of Examiners, Mysore and VTU, Karnataka. At present, he is member (BOE) PES college of Engineering, Mandya. He has published 2 papers in International Journals.

T.G. Rajiv B.E., M.Tech, is presently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering of Acharya Institute of Technology, Bangalore. He is a post graduate in machine design from BIT, Bangalore. His key research area of interest is MMC’s and PMC’s composites. He has published 2 papers in International Journals.

Mr. Harendra Kumar H.V obtained his B.E Mech from EWIT, Bangalore in 2009 and is a P.G student (M Tech Machine Design) at Acharya Institute of Technology, Bangalore. He holds associate membership of American Society of Mechanical Engineers. He has published 10 papers in International Journals.