

Microstructure and Mechanical Properties of Metals Subjected to Equal Channel Angular Pressing (ECAP) Process

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Keywords: ECAP; Severe Plastic Deformation; Grain Refinement

ABSTRACT – Equal Channel Angular Pressing (ECAP) is one of the most efficient technique in metal forming process which induced severe plastic deformation (SPD) for the production of bulk ultrafine-grained metals. This research used Titanium CP Grade 2 and Aluminum Alloy 6061 to investigate the microstructure and mechanical properties of both materials after ECAP process. The materials were extruded through die channel angle of 126° internal and 10° external under pressure of 60 bar. The result shows that there is significant increase in grain refinement and hardness after ECAP process for both of the materials.

1. INTRODUCTION

Equal Channel Angular Pressing (ECAP) has been one of the most popular Severe Plastic Deformation (SPD) techniques for refining grain on metals and composites. The process was developed by Segal et al.[1] in the early 80's and up until today, the development of this process has been improvised especially by Valiev, R. and T.G. Langdon[2] in order to get better product. ECAP process will produce better grain refinement, with improved strength but retain approximately the same size and shape of the billet before and after the process.

Sanusi, O., et al. [3] stated that SPD technique is a generic term describing a group of metal working techniques that involve using extreme plastic straining to produce materials by imposing very high shear deformation on the materials under superimposed hydrostatic pressure. Several SPD technique have been developed such as High Pressure Torsion (HPT), Accumulative Roll Bonding (ARB), Accumulative Back Extrusion (ABE) and Equal Channel Angular Pressing (ECAP).

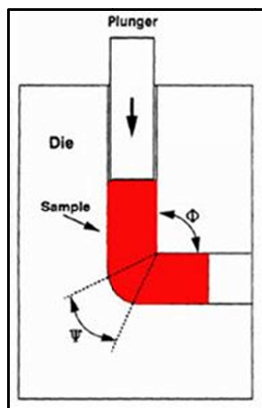


Figure 1: Principle of ECAP process

Figure 1 shows that the basic principle of ECAP

process which the sample will be extruded through two intersecting channels which have the same cross-section with die internal angle (ϕ) and die external angle (ψ) by using a plunger as stated by Djavanroodi, F., et al.[4]. The cross-section of the die can either be circular or square. Because ECAP process can be repeated for several times, shear deformation will influence the production of high strength and lightweight materials without compromising their dimension.

In this research, the objective is to conduct ECAP process on Titanium CP Grade 2 (Ti ASTM Grade 2) and Aluminium Alloy 6061 (AA 6061); and to compare the microstructure and mechanical properties of both materials before and after ECAP process.

2. METHODOLOGY

The ECAP die used for this research was a removable die in circular channel with internal angle of 126° and external angle of 10° as indicated on Figure 2.



Figure 2: The die used for the experiments.

The removable die consist of two plate bolted together in order to form the circular channel which then will be locked by die holder. The samples are in the form of cylindrical rod which 10mm in diameter and 100mm in length. The samples were lubricated by using molybdenum disulfide (MoS_2) lubricant. The samples undergoes ECAP process by using Hydraulic Pressure machine under the pressure of 60 bar at room temperature. The ECAP-ed samples hardness was tested using Vickers hardness Matsuzawa hardness machine type MMT-X7 which uses diamond indenter in the shape of pyramid with square base. The result of the sample hardness will be calculated by using the following formula:

$$\text{Vickers Hardness, HV} = 2F \sin \frac{136/2}{D^2} \quad [1]$$

The microstructure of ECAPed samples is analyzed under optical microstructure test by using

Wilson Hardness Machine to observe the grain size.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The hardness test result across the surface of the samples are shown on Figure 3 and Figure 4. It was clearly shown that there is an increase of hardness value after ECAP process. After ECAP, the average hardness for Ti ASTM Grade 2 is increased for 127% while for AA 6061 is increased for 194%. Based on the calculation of the formula, it showed that as the diagonal length decreases, the value of hardness increase.

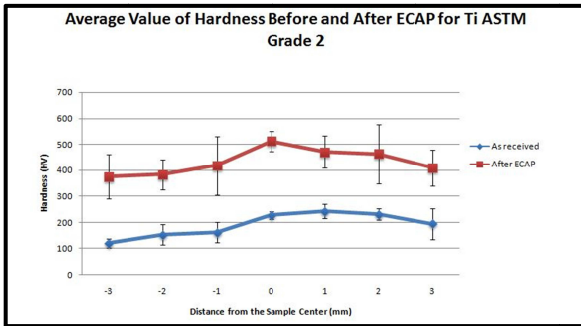


Figure 3: Graph of hardness of Ti ASTM Grade 2

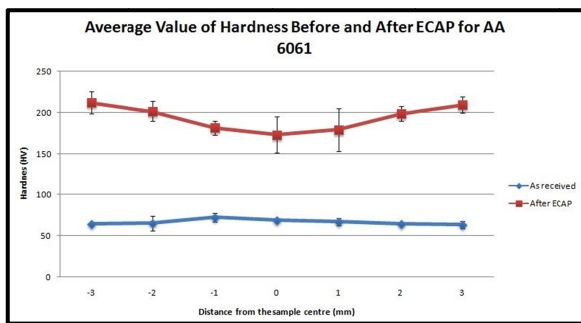


Figure 4: The hardness profile of AA 6061

The microstructure of the samples after ECAP are in term of grain sizes and shown in the Table 1 and Table 2 for both of materials. It can be seen that the grain sizes of the samples decrease significantly after ECAP process. For Ti ASTM Grade 2, there is approximately 61% decrease in grain size compared to as received condition while for AA 6061, there is approximately 83% decrease in grain size compared to as received condition.

Table 1: Average calculation of grain size of Ti ASTM Grade 2

Process	Area	Mean	Min	Max	Average grain size (µm)
As-received	29.7	79.08	150.38	55.04	28.69
ECAP	12.2	50.79	99.29	50.79	11.17

Table 2: Average calculation of grain size of AA6061

Process	Area	Mean	Min	Max	Average grain size (µm)
As-received	10.51	183.86	98.27	253.29	35.49
ECAP	2.06	152.73	81.94	206.09	6.72

4. CONCLUSION

In this research, experiments are conducted to investigate the hardness and the microstructure of Ti ASTM Grade 2 and AA 6061 after ECAP process. The data collected shows that there are significant increase in term of grain refinement and also hardness for both of materials even after single pass.

Based on the results, we can see that ECAP process is indeed proved to be the alternative technique to produce bulk materials under SPD technique which does not sacrifice the dimension of the materials.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work is supported by Universiti Malaysia Pahang (RDU150385). We also would like to thanks Nurul Izzati Binti Mohamad Sobri and Norhafizah Wati Rizal Binti Yusoh for their supports.

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