Effect of Bevel Angles and Heat Input on Hardness Property and Microstructures of Mild Steel Weldments

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Abstract: The effect of bevel angles and welding heat input on hardness property and microstructures of mild steel weldments was carried out in this work. A pair each of 150 x 50 x 10 mm mild steel specimens with bevel angles of 30°, 45°, 60° and 90°, were manually welded with electric arc welding process. The welded specimens were machined to specification of the test samples. The samples were subjected to microstructural analysis of the weldments and the Heat Affected Zone (HAZ). This was followed by hardness test of the weldments and HAZ of the welded samples. Results showed that the heat input for optimum hardness property is 60° bevel angle (13.61 KJ/mm). The hardness is maximum for the weldment at bevel angle of 60° (173.2 Hv) sample while for the HAZ and the base plate, maximum hardness was attained at 45° (199.5 Hv and 174.5 Hv) bevel angle sample. The microstructures indicated the presence of ferrite (α) and pearlite (α + FeC3). The microstructure has finest grain at 45° bevel angle sample as compared with the base metal of as-received sample.

Key words: Bevel angles, Hardness, Heat Affected Zone, Heat input rate.

1. Introduction

Welding is a fabrication process used to join materials, usually metals or thermoplastic, together [1]. During welding, the pieces to be joined (the workpieces) are melted at the joining interface and usually a filler material is added to form a pool of molten material (the weld pool) that solidifies to become a strong joint. The size of bevel angle determines the volume of filler metal deposit and the welding parameters determines the heat input rate which has effect on the hardness of weld and Heat Affected Zone (HAZ). Heat transferred to the base metal alters its grains structure. One of the most remarkable features in arc welding is that the base metals is locally heated to a high temperature and sometimes even more and rapidly cooled during its process. Thus it will be evident that the range of temperature change is varied from at least the melting point of the material to the room temperature. Due to this metallurgical problems in weld arise. It may, at the glance, be predicted that various difficulties associated with welded joints are related to the effects of welding heat which in turn affects the metallurgical structures in and around the welded joint and subsequently the mechanical properties of the joints [2], [3].

The mechanical properties of welded joints depend on several factors including heat input [4]. During
welding, applied heat and the subsequent cooling-rate influences the mechanical parameters of weldments to some extent [5], and hence the present work has been undertaken to study the effect of bevel angles and heat input on hardness property and microstructures of mild steel weldments. In the present investigation the welding parameter determined to reflect the heat conditions in the weldments is heat input rate. In the present study the mechanical property are hardness and welding parameter is the heat input rate which is obtained from the collected shop floor data. With a view to achieving the aforementioned aim, the hardness test and microstructure have been carried out to obtain the required information about the effects of heat input rate on the weld zone and Heat Affected Zone (HAZ) for mild steel weldments which is in line with the work of [6]. The results obtained are useful for selecting correct bevel angle geometry process variables for achieving desired hardness of weld and Heat Affected Zone (HAZ) [5].

2. Materials and Equipment

The mild steel plate of thickness 10 mm was procured locally and the chemical properties was analysed using spectrometric analyser. Four samples each having the edge preparation at varying bevel angle 30°, 45°, 60°, 90° and a pair as-received were made from the mild steel plates. Each sample consists of two plates having the size 150 mm lengths by 50 mm width before welding as shown Fig. 1. The composition of the base metal is given Table 1.

![Fig. 1. Plate sample of the base metal as-received](image)

Table 1. Chemical Composition of Mild Steel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>Al</th>
<th>Si</th>
<th>P</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>Ti</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>Cr</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>0.0099</td>
<td>0.1671</td>
<td>0.1795</td>
<td>0.0249</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>0.6115</td>
<td>0.0164</td>
<td>0.0365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mn</td>
<td>0.4769</td>
<td>98.3978</td>
<td>0.0600</td>
<td>0.0064</td>
<td>0.0077</td>
<td>0.0060</td>
<td>0.0000</td>
<td>0.0094</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following equipment were used for the research: EDXRF Spectrophotometer (EDX3600B) machine for XRF of the base metal, Electric Arc Welding Machine for the welding of the plates samples, Milling machine, Optical Metallurgical Microscope (Nicon Eclipse ME600) having 100x magnification for the microstructures of the samples and Leco Micro Hardness Tester LM700AT using 490 MN major loads and dwell time was 10 seconds for the hardness test.

2.1. Welding Procedure

All the samples were welded manually with electric arc welding machine using MS electrodes at varying
currents. Each run was de-slagged by conventional method prior to successive welding runs. The samples were allowed to cool in air. The welding current and arc voltage were taken while time of weld was taken by stop watch. The number of runs for each of the weldments was noted.

2.2. Machining of the Samples

Test samples were milled from the welded specimens in pairs having dimension 50 mm lengths by 40 mm width by 8 mm thickness and 90 mm length by 18 mm width by 5 mm thickness respectively according to the specification of the Engineering Materials Development Institute (EMDI), Akure, Nigeria, as presented in Fig. 2.

2.3. Hardness Test

Hardness test of the weld and heat affected zone (HAZ) of all the samples were carried out by Leco Micro Hardness Tester LM700AT using 490 MN major loads and dwell time was 10 seconds. Hardness for each of the samples was measured on the surfaces of the weld and Heat Affected Zone (HAZ) and also the base metal in line with the work of [6].

2.4. Microstructures of the Welded Metal

There was a proper study of the metallurgical structure of the weld zone as well as heat affected zone (HAZ) of all the samples. The samples were ground to remove rough surfaces. These were molded with a plastic for proper holding; the surfaces were polished and cleaned by emery paper to remove dirt and finally etched (the weld zone and heat affected zone (HAZ) of all the samples were dipped in 2% Nital agent for etching and finally dried by using blower). The microstructures of weld zone and heat affected zone (HAZ) of all the samples were carried out using Optical Metallurgical Microscope (Nicon Eclipse ME600) having 100x magnification [7].

3. Results and Discussions

The welding parameters results for each run and travel speed are shown in Table 2. The average heat input rate for each bevel angle 30°, 45°, 60°, and 90° were found and shown in Fig. 3.
Table 2. Values of Welding Parameters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample No</th>
<th>No of runs</th>
<th>Arc Voltage, E (V)</th>
<th>Actual Time of Welding, t (s)</th>
<th>Travel Speed, S.(mm/min)</th>
<th>Heat input, H. (kJ/mm) per run</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bevel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>94.74</td>
<td>10.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angle 30°</td>
<td></td>
<td>122</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>145.16</td>
<td>12.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>121.62</td>
<td>14.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>112.50</td>
<td>15.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>66.67</td>
<td>15.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angle 45°</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>123.29</td>
<td>11.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>107.14</td>
<td>14.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>113</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>128.57</td>
<td>12.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>68.70</td>
<td>14.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angle 60°</td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>128.57</td>
<td>11.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>108</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>98.90</td>
<td>15.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>123.29</td>
<td>16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bevel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>65.69</td>
<td>15.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angle 90°</td>
<td></td>
<td>85</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>150.00</td>
<td>8.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>150.00</td>
<td>10.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>110</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>139.46</td>
<td>11.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 3. Average Heat Input Rate (kJ/mm) for Varying Bevel Angles

The 60° bevel angle was found to have the highest average heat input of 13.61 kJ/mm; this implied slower cooling rate which would affect the formation of grain structures while 90° bevel angles has the lowest average heat input of 11.38 kJ/mm as shown Fig. 3; which implied rapid cooling. The heat input influenced the cooling rate, which may affect the mechanical properties and metallurgical structure of the weld and the HAZ. Higher heat input caused slower cooling rate and lower heat input led to faster cooling rate. The heat input increases from 30° to 45° to 60° as shown in Fig. 3. Metallurgical changes occurred during the cooling from one phase to another which altered the mechanical and microstructural properties of the weldment and the Heat Affected Zone (HAZ) as the rate of cooling will affect the length of HAZ.

The hardness tests results were as presented in Table 3.
### Table 3. Hardness test result for each bevel angle samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Samples</th>
<th>Weldment (Hv)</th>
<th>HAZ (Hv)</th>
<th>Base Plate (Hv)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30° Bevel Angle</td>
<td>155.9</td>
<td>179.1</td>
<td>109.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45° Bevel Angle</td>
<td>151.1</td>
<td>199.5</td>
<td>174.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60° Bevel Angle</td>
<td>173.2</td>
<td>174.5</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90° Bevel Angle</td>
<td>107.9</td>
<td>139.9</td>
<td>102.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The hardness test of the Base metal as – received sample was 245 (Hv)

#### 3.1. Effect of Bevel Angle on the Hardness

We observed from Table 3 that the hardness was highest for the weldment at 60° bevel angle while for the HAZ and the base plate, maximum hardness was attained at 45° bevel angle.

Also, the hardness was lowest for the weldment and HAZ at bevel angle of 90°. This is due to the facts that as the bevel angle increases, the heat input also increases, which makes the peak temperature value to increase. The hardness of HAZ is greater than the hardness of the weldment area (except at 45° bevel angle heat treated); this is due to the fact that the heat is more concentrated at the weldment than at the HAZ. Heat is transferred from the weld zone to the HAZ and the base plate. According to [8], as the peak temperature value increases, the hardness of the material decreases. We found that the hardness of weldment and HAZ for 60° bevel angle was greater than the hardness of weldment and HAZ for 70° bevel angle by [5]. Increase in the bevel angle leads to increase in heat input as the number of passes or runs in 70° bevel angle is more than the number of passes in 60° bevel angle. [9] asserted that as the number of passes increases, the tempering effect also increases and thus the hardness of weld and HAZ decreases.

#### 3.2. Micrograph of the Welded Metal

The result of the chemical composition analysis of the mild steel sample in Table 3.1 showed that the percentage of the iron present is 98.3978% which constituted the volume fraction of the ferrite (α) present in the microstructures and the carbon content is 0.0099%. The carbon is interstitial solute in the iron. It formed a solid solution called ferrite. The %C in ferrite is 0.008%. The analysis shows that the sample is dead – mild steel based on the level of carbon composition. Generally, the phases are composed majorly of ferrite (α) and pearlite (α + Fe₃C) with more volume fraction of ferrite and pearliters were uniformly distributed in the micrographs. Both phases are well dispersed all over the microstructures. This is depicted in Plate 1.

![Plate 1: Micrograph of the Base Metal as – received](image-url)
3.2. Effect of Heat Input Rate on the Hardness of Weld Zone and Heat Affected Zone (HAZ)

We deduced in accordance to the mechanical properties that pearlite has properties intermediate to soft, ductile ferrite and hard, brittle cementite (in the micrograph, the dark areas were the FeC₃ layers and light phases were α – ferrite). Variation in volume fraction and the grain size of ferrite was observed in all the Heat Affected Zone (HAZ) microstructures examined. Pearlite phase was equally seen to be present in all the microstructures examined, also observed in the microstructures of HAZ samples were inclusions in form of dark spots which may have resulted from impurities such as moisture and dirt, porosities in form of pin holes which may be due to relative effectiveness of the arc welding process. Microstructures with different weld profiles due to vary bevel angle during edge preparations were obtained for 30°, 45°, 60° and 90° bevel angle geometries and as – received base metal both for treated. One of the major factors that affected the hardness of the Heat Affected Zone (HAZ) was cooling rate. Now from the previous literature review it has been seen that the heat input is inversely proportional to cooling rate (Funderburk, 1999). That means as the heat input increases the cooling rate decreases and due to which the concentration of the pearlite increases as shown in Plate 2 (b), 3 (b), 4 (b), 5 (b).

Plate 2: Micrograph of the (a) Weldment (b) HAZ (c) Base Metal of 30° Bevel Angle after etching in 2% nital solution at magnification 100x

Plate 3: Micrograph of the (a) Weldment (b) HAZ (c) Base Metal of 45° Bevel Angle after etching in 2% nital solution at magnification 100x

Plate 4: Micrograph of the (a) Weldment (b) HAZ (c) Base Metal of 60° Bevel Angle after etching in 2% nital solution at magnification 100x
4. Conclusion

The effect of bevel angles and heat input on mechanical properties and microstructural properties of mild steel were investigated; the mechanical and microstructural properties of welded samples were determined; and these properties were evaluated. The following conclusions were drawn:

(i) At constant voltage, the heat input rate was as follows for 30° (13.08 kJ/mm), 45° (13.49 kJ/mm), 60° (13.61 kJ/mm) and 90° (11.38 kJ/mm). The finding established that heat input for optimum mechanical properties of the weldments was 60° bevel angle.

(ii) The result of the hardness showed that there was an increase in the hardness values of the entire bevel angle at the HAZ. The hardness was highest for the weldment at bevel angle of 60° sample while for the HAZ and the base plate, maximum hardness was attained at 45° bevel angle untreated sample. There were decreases in the values of the hardness for the entire bevel angle as compared to the result of the hardness of the base metal as-received sample was found to be 245 Hv.

(iii) The microstructural analyses showed that the microstructure has finest grain at 45° bevel angle sample as compared with the base metal as-received sample thereby giving optimum hardness property and microstructures for engineering applications, welding and fabrication as well as oil and gas industries using mild steel.

References


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