



## Stir Casting Process Optimization for Enhanced Mechanical Properties of Metal Matrix Composites

*Dr U.Sudhakar<sup>1</sup>, K.Yuvaraju<sup>2</sup>, K.Shanmukha Rao<sup>3</sup>, M.Shiva Krishna<sup>4</sup>, M.Kula Sekhar<sup>5</sup>*

Department of Mechanical Engineering, Grandhi Mallikarjuna Rao Institute of Technology (GMRIT), Rajam 532127, India

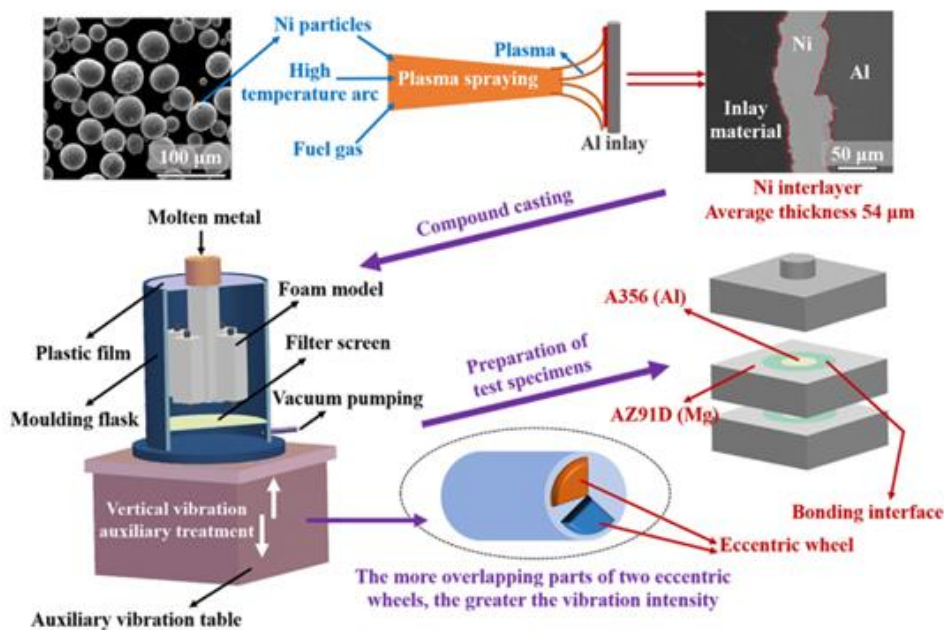
### ABSTRACT :

Mechanical as well as biocompatible properties of AZ31B magnesium alloy are enhanced through the reinforcement process with nano-hydroxyapatite (nHA) and nano-alumina (Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>) using the stir casting process. AZ31B-0.5(Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>)-0.3nHA attained the highest compressive strength of 171 MPa, along with hardness of 95 BHN, significantly higher than the base alloy. The biocompatibility evaluations revealed a relatively safe profile for biological applications, but the corrosion resistance was found to be lower for the nHA-reinforced samples than that of the unreinforced samples, thus requiring further optimization. The nanocomposites in the magnesium-based type hold tremendous promise as biodegradable implants where the implant provides mechanical support where necessary but requires minimal surgical interventions. Future research directions are proposed to refine the composition and processing techniques to make these materials more effective in biomedical applications.

**Keywords:** Stir casting, Mechanical properties, Biocompatibility, Compressive strength, Hardness, Corrosion resistance, Biodegradable implants, Composition optimization, Biomedical applications, Nanocomposites

### 1.INTRODUCTION:

This study investigates further in the MMC development and optimization using stir casting, with emphasis on Al/Mg bimetallic composites and copper-based hybrid composites. While Al/Mg bimetal materials show much potential, the limitation of their wide application lies in the brittle Al-Mg intermetallic compounds and the coarse primary dendritic structures at the Al/Mg bimetallic composite interface, thereby being restrained from bonding

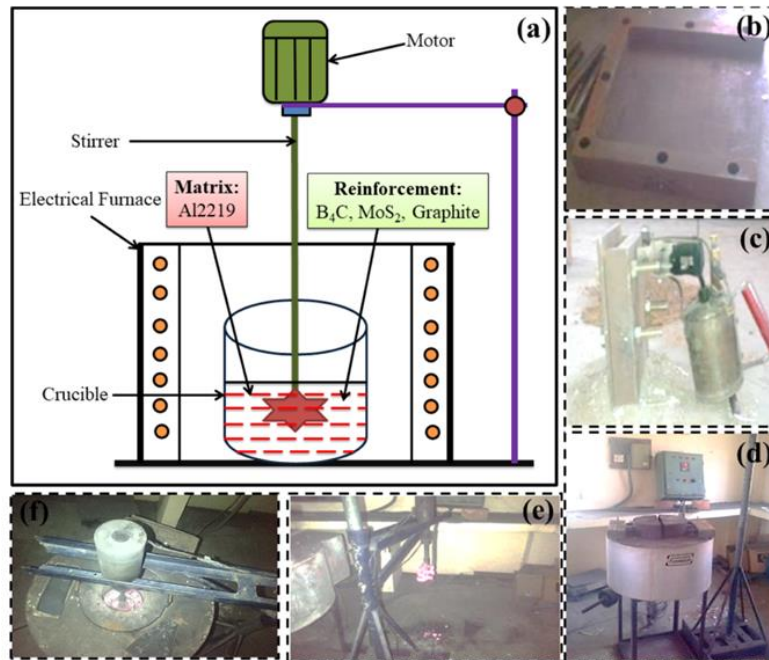


Experimental schematic diagram for preparing Al/Mg composite interface.

performance. Recent researches focus on interface alloying, external force fields, and metal interlayers; among them, nickel interlayers have especially implied potential in preventing the diffusion of Al and Mg atoms and the growth of IMCs. However, the quality of the nickel interlayer tends to varies

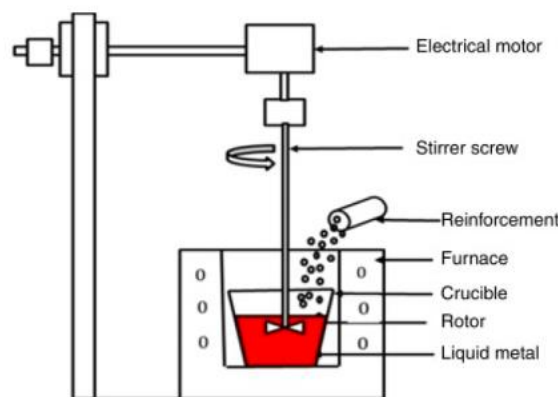
with preparation processes, which may lead to oxidation and poorer bonding with the base metals. To this end, this study examines the impact of vibration-assisted processing combined with a pretreated nickel interlayer on the microstructure and bonding performance at the Al/Mg bimetallic composite interface to guide the development and application of Al/Mg bimetal materials.

The aluminum metal matrix composites (AMMCs) offer strength, stiffness, corrosion resistance, and durability in excess amounts that make them suitable for aerospace and automotive applications. Specifically, AA2219 alloy reinforced with hard B<sub>4</sub>C and self-lubricating Gr and MoS<sub>2</sub> particles shows promise because of its lightweight, resistance to stress corrosion cracking, and high fracture toughness. However, machining of AMMCs involves problems arising from the abrasive nature of hard reinforcement particles, which leads to the increase in friction, cutting forces, and tool wear. To mitigate this, researchers studied optimization of stir casting and drilling process parameters with respect to the AA2219 alloy hybrid composites focusing on the aspects of hardness, wear properties, hole quality characterization, such as burr height, material removal rate, and thrust force. Employing the Taguchi method and the Data Envelopment Analysis Ranking (DEAR) method, the work aimed at fabrication of a lightweight structural material with excellent properties, giving industry personnel valuable insights in improving performance in aerospace as well as automotive applications.



a. Schematic representation of Stir casting set-up, b. Slab die c. Preheating the dies d. Electrical resistance furnace, e. Stirrer, f. Stir casting.

Copper-based composites have good wear resistance, corrosion resistance, mechanical properties, and electrical properties. It widely finds applications in the electronics and automotive industries. However, force transfer becomes challenging due to poor wetting characteristics between copper and ceramic reinforcements, affecting mechanical properties. To improve that, hybrid composites made of stainless steel and ceramics were incorporated within a copper matrix, taking benefits from the wettability as well as desirable properties of ceramics. The study is focused on Cu-HSSS-WC hybrid composites containing highly strained stainless steel (HSSS) and tungsten carbide (WC) as reinforcements. HSSS, an industrial waste, is found to possess high strength due to its fine microstructure, whereas WC possesses high strength, wear resistance, and hardness. This research aimed at synthesizing Cu-HSSS-WC composites through stir casting followed by the evaluation of their mechanical properties and corrosion behaviour in 0.1M NaCl solution by investigating the concentrations of HSSS. The findings are against pure copper, in which enhancements achieved through HSSS and WC reinforcements help to develop copper-based hybrid composites with improved properties for varied engineering applications.



Block diagram of stir casting process

The biodegradable metallic biomaterial magnesium has great promise for bone tissue engineering because of its biocompatibility, biodegradability, and mechanical properties. However, its rapid corrosion in bodily fluids presents a challenge. In that regard, research has taken different approaches such as alloying, coating, and compositing methods. This current research is on the improvement of biocompatibility and further enhancement of bioactivity, corrosion resistance, and the mechanical properties of AZ31B magnesium alloy with reinforcement from nano-hydroxyapatite (nHA) and nano-alumina (Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>). AZ31B's zinc and aluminium alloying elements are the reasons for its enhanced properties. The paper studied the consequences of nHA and Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> reinforcement to the microstructure and mechanical properties of Mg metal matrix nanocomposite made by stir casting in order to optimize magnesium compounds for biomedical purposes specifically implant orthopedics, where the biodegradability and bioactivity of magnesium can be worthwhile.

## 2.METHODOLOGY:

### 2.1: Strengthening of composite casting Al/Mg bimetallic interface with Ni interlayer by vibration assisted treatment:

**1. SEM Scanning Electron Microscopy:** observed microstructure and fracture morphology at the Al/Mg bimetallic composite interface.

**2. EDS Energy-Dispersive Spectroscopy:** determined composition and distribution of elemental bonding interface distribution, incorporating:

- Line scans

- Area scans

**Sample Testing Procedure:**

**Shear Strength Testing:**

1. Cutting samples to a thinness of about 3 mm using a wire cutting machine.

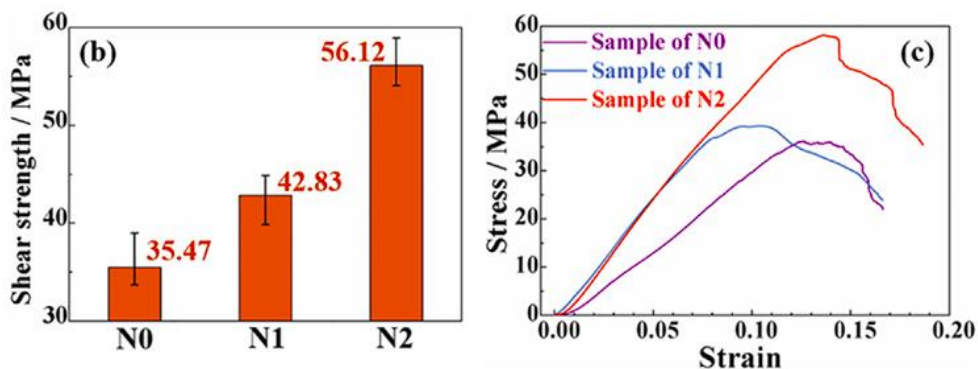
2. Measured bonding strength in a material performance testing machine:

- Peak load: 20kN

Load speed: 0.5 mm/min

3. Calculation of shear strength by applying a particular formula.

4. Calculation of average values of three shear strengths obtained for each sample.



**Hardness Tests:**

1. Vickers hardness tester:

- Load: 200 g

Pressure holding time: 15 s

2. Average hardness distribution of the Al/Mg composite interface was tested.

**3. Morphology analysis of fracture:**

1. Analyzed fracture morphology of samples to understand failure mechanisms.

### 2.2: Optimization of stir casting and drilling process parameters of hybrid composites:

The step-by-step procedure for fabricating AA2219/B4C/Gr/MoS<sub>2</sub> hybrid composites using the stir casting method

**•Preparation of Material**

○AA2219 ingots of 99.5% purity were procured by the researchers.

○The AA2219 ingots were further cut into pieces with the use of a hacksaw power saw.

○The researchers also procured B4C reinforcement material with average 85 μm size, graphene having 99% purity, and a particle size of 35 ± 5 nm, and MoS<sub>2</sub> with 99% purity and a particle size of 35 ± 5 nm.

○A set amount of reinforcements (15 wt% of B4C and 0.5 – 2.5 wt% of Gr and MoS<sub>2</sub>) was dehydrated at 400 °C in an electric resistance muffle furnace to remove moisture, dampness, agglomeration, and foreign particles.

**Melting and Addition of Reinforcement**

The cut AA2219 alloy was melted in a 3 kg capacity graphite crucible

The preheated reinforcements were packed in aluminium foil with a steel rod and were introduced at the bottom of the melted AA2219 alloy at 700 °C.

### Stirring

- A mechanical stirrer driven by a 1 HP DC motor was used to ensure homogenous reinforcement dispersion within the AA2219 matrix.
- Researchers controlled the stirrer speed utilizing the dimmer stat of the DC motor.

A screw operator lift was used for controlling the stirrer position.

- The stirrer rotated at a preset speed for 3 minutes to create a vortex in the melt.

### ● Degassing and Cleaning

- Powdered hexachloroethane (C<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>6</sub>) tablets were packed in aluminium foil with a steel rod and introduced to the bottom of the melt to remove absorbed or dissolved gases.
- Cover flux was used to clean the molten metal, remove impurities, and eliminate slags on the surface.

### ● Pouring and Solidification

- The cleaned molten metal was poured into a 140 × 70 × 10 mm slab die.

### Post Casting Processing

The pre-formed composite prepared was milled to create a horizontal flat surface.

The specimens were cut into two pieces, each measuring 140 × 35 × 10 mm.

### Characterization

The Researchers conducted mechanical (hardness) and tribological (wear rate) characterization of the composites as per ASTM standards.

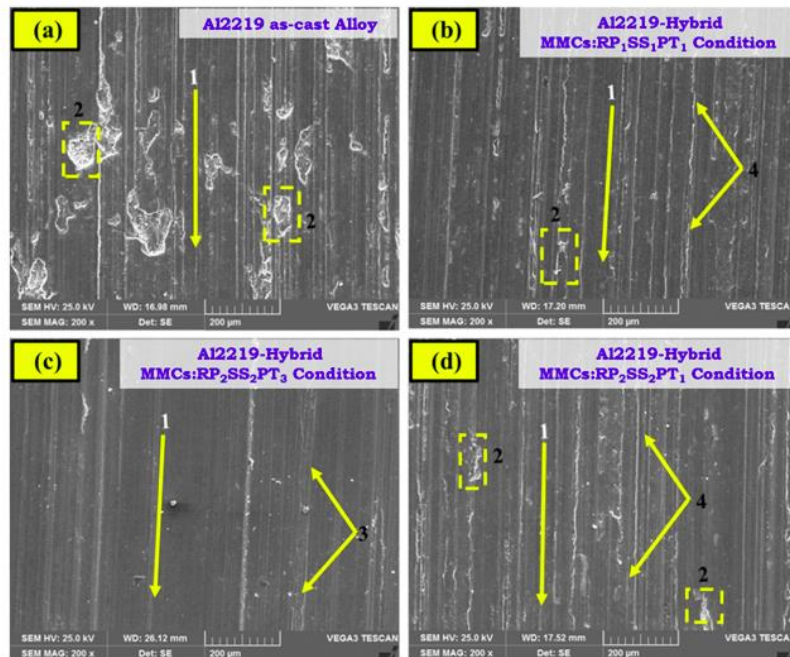
■ **Hardness Measurement:** A Vickers hardness tester was used to measure the hardness of composite samples of dimensions 20 × 20 × 10 mm as per ASTM E384 standards.

■ **Wear Rate Measurement:** A pin-on-disc wear test rig was used to investigate wear examination of machined specimens sized at 6 mm in diameter and 30 mm in height against the surface of a 60 HRC EN-32 steel disc with a diameter of 160 mm and 8 mm thick.

■ **Surface Roughness Measurement:** The surface roughness of the cylindrical wear samples was checked on a surface roughness tester. The average surface roughness (Ra) value was maintained at  $0.8 \pm 0.06 \mu\text{m}$ .

■ **Microstructural Analysis:** Metallographic studies were carried out using the scanning electron microscope (SEM) for stir casting and the wear samples. Stir-cast samples were etched with Keller's reagent.

The variables affecting the quality of the composite were created with stir casting such as the percent reinforcement of Gr and MoS<sub>2</sub>, stir speed, and pouring temperature.



Wear surface morphology

### 3.CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, the results show a successful strategy to highly strengthen the bonding performance of the Al/Mg bimetallic composite interfaces. The introduction of a Ni interlayer in an appropriate proportion, followed by vibration-assisted treatment, indeed overcame the inherent weakness related to the brittle AlMg IMCs, thereby providing a more robust and high-strength composite interface. This innovative method holds great promise for promoting the development and application of Al/Mg bimetallic materials in various engineering fields.

The study concludes that the reinforcement of nano-hydroxyapatite (nHA) and nano-alumina (Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>) in AZ31B magnesium alloy significantly enhances its mechanical properties and biocompatibility, thus becoming a suitable candidate for biomedical applications. The best composition, AZ31B-

0.5(Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>)-0.3nHA, achieved the highest compressive strength of 171 MPa because of a well-distributed reinforcement; the hardness of the composites increased with addition of nHA and reached its maximum value of 95 BHN. The corrosion resistance, however, was a bit compromised by this specimen, being in the AZ31B-nHA sample. Besides, cytotoxicity tests showed only slight reactivity; this means that the material is quite secure in use in biologic media. In general, the results demonstrated the possibility of magnesium-based nanocomposites as biodegradable implants providing enough mechanical support with a minimum degree of additional surgical interventions. The next step should be the adjustment of composition and processing technology to improve the properties of these materials.

The work concludes that nano-hydroxyapatite (nHA) and nano-alumina (Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>) reinforcement of AZ31B magnesium alloy through the stir casting process significantly improves its mechanical properties and biocompatibility, thus making it a promising candidate for biomedical applications. The optimal composition, specifically AZ31B-0.5(Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>)-0.3nHA, revealed the highest compressive strength of 171 MPa, which was attributed to the uniform distribution of reinforcements in the metal matrix. Composites showed an increase in hardness with the incorporation of nHA, and reached 95 BHN. Although promising mechanical performance was demonstrated by the composites, corrosion resistance of the corrosion sample was the lowest in AZ31B-nHA, which requires further optimization work. In vitro cytotoxicity tests demonstrated a rather mild response and indicates that the material is relatively non-toxic for biological use. The results indicate that magnesium-based nanocomposites are good biodegradable implants, capable of yielding the necessary mechanical strength without causing increased surgical intervention. The future study should aim at refining composition and processing to make the materials better suited for biomedical applications.

The study of AZ31B magnesium alloy, strengthened with nano-hydroxyapatite (nHA) and nano-alumina (Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>), has shown that this material has remarkable mechanical properties, including a maximum compressive strength of 171 MPa and hardness of 95 BHN. Although the biocompatibility investigations proved its certain safety of application for biomedical purposes, the corrosion resistance improvement is necessary. Overall, these results place magnesium-based nanocomposites as potential biodegradable candidates for transient implants and deserve further research on the refinement of their composition and processing, to greatly improve their performance in the clinic.

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