

EFFECT OF TWO-STEP PRETREATMENT ON COBALT CONTENTS AND
SURFACE ROUGHNESS OF TUNGSTEN CARBIDE SUBSTRATE PRIOR TO
DIAMOND COATING

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Dedicated to my beloved spouse, my little son, my beloved parents and mother in law

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ABSTRACT

Cemented tungsten carbide is the most widely used material for cutting tools. Due to extreme demands higher tool life several types of coating have been introduced to prolong the service time which include diamond coating. However cobalt binder in tungsten carbide prevents diamond to adhere well on the substrate and its content at the outer surface should be reduce to below 1%. Single step and two-step pretreatments have been studied by many researchers. But to date poor adhesion of diamond coating still an issue. In this work a two-step pretreatment was used to etch tungsten carbide with 6% cobalt (WC-6% Co) at the surface of the substrate in order to solve poor adhesion problem. First step with Murakami's reagent (2, 3, 6, and 20 minutes) and the second step of the process were carried out by etching in a solution of hydrochloric acid (30, 45, and 60 seconds) or a solution of sulfuric acid (10 seconds). The effect of them on Co cemented tungsten carbide samples in term of surface morphology, surface roughness, and cobalt removal from the surface were examined. It is found the longer Murakami etching time produces a slightly rougher surface than the shorter exposing time. Both acid solutions were used in the second pretreatment step able to reduce cobalt content to below 1% at all conditions regardless of etching time. The best combination of pretreatment process is 20 minutes Murakami etching and 45 seconds exposure time of hydrochloric acid that yields the higher surface roughness and the lowest cobalt content on the substrate surface.

ABSTRAK

Tungsten karbida semen adalah bahan yang paling banyak digunakan dalam alat-alat pemotongan. Disebabkan oleh permintaan yang tinggi terhadap alatan pemotong yang berjangka hayat lama, kaedah saduran diperkenalkan untuk meningkatkan masa penggunaannya termasuklah saduran berlian. Walaubagaimanapun, pengikat kobalt di dalam tungsten karbida menghalang berlian daripada melekat dengan sempurna pada substrak dan kandungannya perlu dikurangkan kepada bawah daripada satu peratus. Kaedah langkah tunggal dan dua-langkah pra-rawatan telah dipelajari oleh ramai penyelidik sebelum ini. Tetapi masalah berlian yang tidak melekat dengan baik masih menjadi isu. Didalam kajian ini, kaedah dua-langkah pra-rawatan digunakan untuk menghakis tungsten karbida dengan 6 peratus kobalt (WC-6% Co) pada permukaan substrak dalam usaha menyelesaikan masalah perekatan yang tidak sempurna ini. Langkah pertama adalah dengan reagen Murakami (2, 3, 6 dan 20 minit) and langkah kedua dalam proses ini ialah pengakisan menggunakan asid hidroklorik (30, 45 dan 60 saat) atau asid sulfurik (10 saat). Kesan daripada eksperimen ini terhadap tungsten karbida semen dikaji dari segi morfologi permukaan, kekasaran permukaan dan penyingkiran kobalt dari permukaan. Didapati bahawa lebih lama masa pengakisan Murakami, ianya memberi kesan yang lebih kasar terhadap permukaan dan lebih singkat masa untuk pendedahan. Kedua-dua larutan asid yang digunakan untuk langkah kedua pra-rawatan ini mampu mengurangkan kandungan kobalt sehingga kurang daripada satu peratus untuk semua keadaan tanpa mempedulikan masa pengakisan. Kombinasi yang terbaik terhadap proses pra-rawatan ini ialah 20 minit pengakisan Murakami dan 45 minit pendedahan masa asid hidroklorik dimana ianya menghasilkan permukaan yang lebih kasar dan kandungan kobalt yang paling sedikit terhadap permukaan substrak.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	TITLE	PAGE
	DECLARATION	ii
	DEDICATION	iii
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
	ABSTRACT	v
	ABSTRAK	vi
	TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
	LIST OF TABLES	xii
	LIST OF FIGURES	xiv
	LIST OF SYMBOLS	xviii
	LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xxi
	LIST OF APPENDIX	xxii
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	1.1 Background of Study	1
	1.2 Statement of problem	3
	1.3 Objective of the Study	3
	1.4 Significant of Study	4

1.5	Scopes of the Study	4
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	5
2.1	Introduction	5
2.2	Cutting Tool Material	6
2.2.1	Tool Material for Precision Machining	6
2.2.2	Super Hard Materials and Tools	8
2.2.3	Technology of CVD Diamond Coated Grinding Tools	12
2.3	Diamonds	15
2.3.1	Natural Diamond	16
2.3.2	Synthetic Diamonds	16
2.3.3	Polycrystalline Diamonds	17
2.4	Substrates	17
2.4.1	Tungsten Carbide	18
2.4.2	Role of Cobalt in Cemented Tungsten Carbide	19
2.5	CVD Coating Methods	21
2.5.1	Hot Filament Chemical Vapor Deposition (HFCVD)	22
2.5.2	Microwave Plasma Enhanced Chemical Vapor Deposition (MPECVD)	26
2.5.3	D.C. Plasma Jet CVD	27
2.5.4	Comparison of the Hot Filament Method with Other Methods	27
2.6	Pretreatment	28
2.6.1	Chemical Pretreatment	29

2.6.2	Bias Enhanced Nucleation (BEN)	36
2.6.3	Interlayer (1-5 μ m)	37
2.6.4	Heat Treatment	38
2.6.5	Scratching and Seeding Pretreatment	39
2.7	Nucleation and Growth	40
2.7.1	Surface Engineering Approach	40
2.8	Diamond Grain Size	41
2.9	Adhesion Strength	43
2.9.1	Adhesion Strength Measurements	43
2.9.2	Residual Stress	45
2.10	Summary of Literature	45
3	RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	59
3.1	Introduction	59
3.2	Detailed Experimental Plan of preliminary Trails	61
3.3	Detailed Experimental Plan for Phase-1 Trails	62
3.4	Detailed Experimental Plan for Phase-2 Trails	64
3.5	Substrate Material	65
3.6	Experimental Equipments	66
3.6.1	Precision Cutting Machine	66
3.6.2	Steam Cleaner	66
3.6.3	Blast Wear Tester (BWT)	67
3.6.4	Weight Balance	67

3.6.5	Portable Tester	68
3.6.6	Ultrasonic Bath Machine	69
3.6.7	Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM)	69
4	RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS	70
4.1	Introduction	70
4.2	Preliminary Results	70
4.2.1	Preliminary Results for Hydrochloric Acid Etching Time	70
4.2.2	Preliminary Results for Murakami Etching Time	72
4.3	Phase-1 Experimental Results	75
4.3.1	Results after Blasting	75
4.3.2	Results after Murakami Etching	79
4.3.3	Results after Acid Etching with HCL Solution	88
4.3.4	Results of Sulfuric Acid Etching	94
4.3.5	Comparing two sulfuric and hydrochloric acid	99
4.4	Phase-2 Experimental Results	99
4.4.1	Etching Rate by Murakami Etchant	100
4.4.2	Surface Roughness after Murakami – H ₂ SO ₄ Etching	102
4.4.3	Surface Morphology after Murakami – H ₂ SO ₄ Etching	104
4.4.4	Cobalt Contents after H ₂ SO ₄ Treatment	107
4.4.5	Effect of Murakami Solution	108
5	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMANDATIONS	110
5.1	Introduction	110

5.2	Conclusions	110
5.3	Recommendations for Future Works	111
	REFERENCES	113
	APPENDICES	119

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Comparison between hot hardness, wear resistance and toughness for cutting tool	7
2.2	properties of cutting tool materials	7
2.3	Suitable materials for cutting with diamond and CBN tooling	9
2.4	Comparison of properties of tungsten carbide and other cutting tool materials	19
2.5	Summery of selected literature reviews	46
4.1	Experimental results for part one preliminary trials	71
4.2	Cobalt content after Murakami etching with varied time followed by ten seconds etching with sulfuric acid	74
4.3	Surface roughness values for incoming WC substrates	76
4.4	Surface roughness and weight before/after Murakami's etching	81
4.5	Percentage of surface roughness increased by Murakami's etchant	82
4.6	TRR of the WC surface layer by Murakami's etchant	85
4.7	Amount of cobalt after first step etching in varied Murakami's etching time	86
4.8	Surface roughness after Murakami and hydrochloric acid etching	90
4.9	EDAX of WC substrate after etching with solution of	

	hydrochloric acid	93
4.10	Surface roughness after sulfuric acid etching	95
4.11	Surface roughness before and after Murakami's etching	96
4.12	EDAX data of WC substrate after etching with solution of sulfuric acid	98
4.13	Weight losses for all substrate after chemical etching	100
4.14	Thickness removal rate of the WC surface layer by Murakami's etchant	101
4.15	Surface roughness before and after Murakami – H ₂ SO ₄ etching	103

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE NO.	TITLE	PAGE
2.1	Relevance tree for cutting tool	8
2.2	Monocrystal diamond cutting edge	10
2.3	Micro tool with mono crystal diamond	10
2.4	CVD diamond-coated spirals drill, diameter 150 μm	11
2.5	Drilled hole diameter 100 μm in silicon	11
2.6	Grinding layer with bonded diamond grains D15	12
2.7	CVD diamond grinding layer, schematic cross-section	13
2.8	Grinding wheel after coating	14
2.9	Comparison of hardness of diamond and inorganic materials	15
2.10	Schematic view of the CVD chamber	22
2.11	SEM micrographs of fine grained WC–Co substrates	30
2.12	FWHM of the WC (1 0 0) peak of fine (1 M) and coarse grained (6 M) substrates	31
2.13	SEM micrographs of fine grained substrates	32
2.14	Diamond nucleation densities	33
2.15	The relationship between diamond nucleation densities and the size of diamond particles	39
2.16	Schematic of the surface engineering approach for fabrication	

	of the nano-microcrystalline diamond film composite coating	
	hard metal cutting tools	41
2.17	Schematic of the cross-section of an indentation on a diamond	
	-coated cemented carbide substrate	44
3.1	Overall research activities flow chart	59
3.2	Methodology flow chart	60
3.3	The preliminary trials plan	61
3.4	Etching flow chart for phase-1 trials	63
3.5	Etching flow chart for phase-2 trials	65
3.6	WC substrate material after cutting from rod	65
3.7	Precision cutting machine	66
3.8	Harnisch+Rieth D-S 100A steam cleaner	67
3.9	Blast wear tester (BWT)	67
3.10	DHAUS weight balance	68
3.11	Portable surface roughness tester	68
3.12	Brain Sonic 12 Ultrasonic Bath	69
3.13	Scanning electron microscope (SEM) equipped with EDX	69
4.1	Cobalt contents versus of hydrochloric acid etching time	71
4.2	SEM micrograph of the WC substrate after cutting	72
4.3	SEM micrographs of WC–Co substrates	73
4.4	Cobalt content verses of Murakami’s etching time	74
4.5	SEM micrograph of the blasted samples	75
4.6	Surface of samples before and after blasting	77
4.7	Surface roughness’s of all samples before and after blasting	77

4.8	Weight losses during the blasting process	78
4.9	Cobalt content for incoming WC and blasted substrate	78
4.10	Surface morphology of WC substrate after Murakami etching	80
4.11	Slightly increased in surface roughness of tungsten carbide	82
4.12	The increment of surface roughness by Murakami's etchant	82
4.13	Weight losses at different Murakami etching time	83
4.14	TRR of WC surface by Murakami's etchant	86
4.15	SEM micrographs of WC-Co substrates morphologies	87
4.16	EDAX of WC substrate after first step etching for 3 minutes	87
4.17	SEM micrographs of WC-Co substrates after being etched	89
4.18	Substrates surface roughness before and after HCL acid	90
4.19	Surface roughnesses before and after HCL etching	91
4.20	EDAX of WC substrate etched for 20 minutes with Murakami	92
4.21	Cobalt content after hydrochloric acid etching	93
4.22	SEM micrographs of WC-Co substrates	94
4.23	WC surface roughnesses before and after sulfuric acid	95
4.24	WC surface roughness's before and after Murakami	96
4.25	EDAX of WC substrate submitted 3 minute with Murakami	97
4.26	Cobalt content after sulfuric acid etching	99
4.27	The effect of different acid solution (HCL and H ₂ SO ₄)	99
4.28	TRR of WC surface layers by Murakami's etchant	102
4.29	Average samples roughness before and after pretreatment	103
4.30	Surface roughness for all samples versus the Murakami	104
4.31	SEM micrographs of WC-Co samples	105

4.32	SEM micrographs of WC–Co samples after Murakami	106
4.33	EDAX of WC substrate submitted 20 minute with Murakami	107
4.34	Cobalt content versus of Murakami's etching time	108
4.35	Magnification 2500X (a) and magnification 5000X (b)	109

LIST OF SYMBOLS

$^{\circ}\text{K}$	-	Kelvin degree
Ag	-	Silver
Al_2O_3	-	Aluminum oxide
Au	-	Gold
CH_4	-	Methane
Co	-	Cobalt
CrC	-	Chromium carbide
Gm	-	Gram
GPa	-	Giga Pascal
H_2	-	Hydrogen
H_2O	-	Water
H_2O_2	-	Hydrogen peroxide
H_2SO_4	-	Sulfuric acid
H_3PO_4	-	Hydro phosphoric acid
HCl	-	Hydrochloride acid
HF	-	Hydrofluoric acid
HNO_3	-	Nitric acid
m	-	Weight

Mg	-	Magnesium
Mo	-	Molybdenum
Nb	-	Niobium
Ni	-	Nickel
NiCr	-	Nickel chromium
Nm	-	Nanometer
Pt	-	Platinum
Ra	-	Average roughness
Ry	-	The peak-to-valley height
Rz	-	Ten-point height
S	-	Area
Sa	-	Section area
Si ₃ N ₄	-	Silicon nitride
SiC	-	Silicon carbide
Ta	-	Tantalum
TiAlN	-	Titanium aluminum nitride
TiC	-	Titanium carbide
TiCN	-	Titanium carbide-nitride
TiN	-	Titanium nitride
V	-	Volume
WC	-	Tungsten carbide
WC-Co	-	Co-cemented tungsten carbide
ZrN	-	Zirconium nitride
Δ	-	Delta

μm	-	Micrometer
ρ_{wc}	-	Bulk density of tungsten carbide
$\rho_{\text{wc-co}}$	-	Bulk density of Co cemented tungsten carbide

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

a-C	-	Amorphous carbon
BEN	-	Bias Enhanced Nucleation
CVD	-	Chemical Vapor Deposition
DOC	-	Depth-Of-Cut
HFCVD	-	Hot Filament Chemical Vapor Deposition
HP-HT	-	High Pressure High Temperature
MCD	-	Microcrystalline Diamond
MMCs	-	Metal Matrix Composites
MPECVD	-	Microwave Plasma Enhanced Chemical Vapor Deposition
NCD	-	Nano-Crystalline Diamond
PACVD	-	Plasma Assisted Chemical Vapor Deposition
PCBN	-	Polycrystalline Cubic Boron Nitride
PCD	-	Polycrystalline Diamond
PVD	-	Physical Vapor Deposition
SEM	-	Scanning Electron Microscope
TMCVD	-	Time-Modulated Chemical Vapor Deposition
TRR	-	Thickness Removal Rate
XRF	-	X – Ray Fluorescenc

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
A	SEM micrographs after hydrochloric etching	119
B	EDAX analysis of WC after hydrochloric acid etching	122
C	SEM micrographs after sulfuric acid etching	128
D	EDAX analysis of WC after sulfuric acid etching	129
E	SEM micrographs after sulfuric acid etching	131
F	EDAX of WC after sulfuric acid etching without blasting	133

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Improvement in materials by hard Chemical Vapor Deposition (CVD) and Physical Vapor Deposition (PVD) coatings are widely used today (Lux *et al.*, 1992). Super hard high pressure products (i.e. polycrystalline diamond (PCD) and polycrystalline cubic boron nitride (PCBN)) currently have a well-established market. Their properties and performance under severe working conditions are generally considered to be outstanding and highly competitive. They are the ultimate standard to be reached or, if possible, even to be exceeded by the new low pressure diamond products now being developed. Both PCD and PCBN are sintered products with appropriate amounts of a binder, and compacted at high temperatures and ultrahigh pressures. Frequently, the PCD or PCBN layers are bonded directly to a cemented carbide substrate.

The candidate work materials are some of the difficult-to-machine materials, such as abrasive aluminum–silicon alloys, glass fiber reinforced composites as well as high-speed machining of cast iron. Without a hard coating such as diamond, the cemented tungsten carbide tools wear rapidly when machining these materials. Consequently, polycrystalline diamond tools made by the high pressure–high temperature (HP–HT) process are used for this application. However, these tools are rather expensive in view of the high cost of the HP–HT process as well as the high cost of shaping and finishing of the tool by diamond grinding and polishing. By coating the cemented carbide tools in its final form with low-pressure CVD diamond,

it is not necessary to finish the coated tool. This along with the less expensive coating process makes these less expensive and more attractive for this application (Mallika and Komanuri., 1999). Two approaches are followed for the CVD diamond coatings on cutting tools. One is to grow thick (1–1.5 mm) free standing polycrystalline diamond slab, cut it to size, and braze it on to the cemented carbide substrate. However, the tools have to be finished to shape before use. In concept, this type is not very much similar to the polycrystalline diamond tools made by HP–HT process in that the tools have to be finished by expensive diamond grinding and polishing. Further, brazing of diamond on to the carbide substrate is an additional operation. The other approach is to develop thin diamond coatings (2–5 μm) on cutting tools. This, in fact, is unique to the CVD diamond process as it is not possible and/or economical to produce thin coatings by the HP–HT process. Microwave CVD, hot-filament CVD, combustion synthesis, and plasma arc are some of the techniques used either individually or in combination to deposit diamond coatings on cutting tools.

Diamond is attractive as an ideal coating material for hard metal cutting tools for its unique combination of excellent properties, i.e., the highest hardness and elastic modulus, very low friction coefficient, the highest thermal conduction coefficient, high strength and the chemical inertness (Lu *et al.*, 2006). PCD tooling having complex shapes, i.e., taps, drill bits, and cannot be formed using any known techniques. Numerous attempts have been made to provide diamond coated tools which have performance approaching that of PCD tools because they would be less costly to manufacture and use, and because diamond coated tools having more complex shapes than are possible with PCD tools are theoretically manufacturable employing substrates such as cemented tungsten carbide.

Bad adhesion is frequently strongly associated with interfacial stress, which depends primarily on the different expansion coefficients of layer and substrate. Excessive internal layer stress is also important (Lux *et al.*, 1992). It was shown that lowering the surface temperature during diamond deposition on cemented carbide tools can improve adhesion of the coating.

1.2 Statement of problems

A significant challenge to the developers of diamond-coated tooling is to optimize adhesion between the diamond film and the substrate to which it is applied, while retaining sufficient surface toughness in the finished product (Michael and Robert, 1996). Sintered tungsten carbide (WC) substrates without cobalt or other binders have been studied but can be too brittle to perform satisfactorily as tooling in machining applications. Cemented tungsten carbide substrates with 6% cobalt have the required toughness and thus show the greatest long-term commercial promise for tooling applications. Cemented tungsten carbide can be formed into a variety of geometries, making it a potential material for drilling operations, die manufacturing, and other applications of value to the automobile and other industries. It is therefore desirable to provide a way to coat cemented tungsten carbide substrates with a layer of diamond film having adequate adhesion to the substrate for use as a machine tool.

A well-known problem is the poor adhesion of diamond films on tungsten carbide due to the Co-binder that catalyzes the formation of graphite. A two step of the chemical pretreatment is the most effective method to etch tungsten carbide at the surface of the substrate in order to solve poor adhesion problem. first step with Murakami's reagent and the second step of the process are carried out by an etch in a solution of hydrochloric acid and hydrogen peroxide in deionized water or a solution of sulfuric acid and hydrogen peroxide. Surprisingly pretreatment with agents such as Murakami's solution is the most effective pretreatment in term of quality and adhesion of diamond coating on WC-Co substrate due to mechanical interlocking. But until now it is not declare the most effective etching time and also it was not reported using a solution of hydrochloric acid and hydrogen peroxide in deionized water as a second step of the process.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objectives of this research were:

1. To analyze the effect of Murakami etching time on Co cemented tungsten carbide surface roughness as well as cobalt content.
2. To evaluate the effect of different acid solution (HCL and H₂SO₄) in second step etching in terms of cobalt removal, surface roughness on Co cemented tungsten carbide.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The most suitable substrate material for producing diamond coated tools is Co-cemented tungsten carbide (WC-Co). In fact, given a limited thickness of the deposition, mechanical stresses are transmitted to the substrate. Diamond coating on hard metal (WC-Co) tools exhibit wear resistance comparable to or even better than polycrystalline diamond tools (PCD). The pretreatment of the substrate plays an important role in determining the adhesion of the diamond coating onto hard metal and the final properties of coated parts. This serves as an useful information for other researchers and manufacturers as evaluation on the diamond adhesion strength which can significantly improve the performance of cutting tool and has great potential to reduce the manufacturing cost.

1.5 Scopes of the Study

The scopes of this study were limited as follows:

1. The substrate material was limited to WC with 6wt% of Co.
2. The study was focused on the two step pretreatment process.
3. Etchant used in this work were Murakami's solution, sulfuric and hydrochloric acids at specific concentration.
4. Response parameters that were evaluated include surface roughness, weight losses and cobalt contents.
5. All experiments were conducted at room temperature.