EFFECT OF ZINC ADDITION ON THE PROPERTIES OF MAGNESIUM
ALLOYS

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A project report submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Engineering
(Mechanical-Advanced Manufacturing Technology)

Faculty of Mechanical Engineering
University Technology Malaysia

JANUARY 2012
To my mother for her tireless prayers

To Engr Isyaku Jibrin Sani for his Financial Support
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to say thank you very much to my supervisor Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohd Hasbullah Bin Hj. Idris for his wonderful supervision style and encouragement throughout the project work

My special regards also goes to my mother for her tireless prayers, and to Engineer Jibring Isyaku Sani for his tremendous financial support

Finally I want to appreciate the effort of all those who have directly or indirectly contributed to the successful completion of this project work, thank you all.
ABSTRACT

Magnesium alloys are currently used in many structural applications. It is believed that magnesium and its alloys may also find applications in biomedical application. In this study, the effects of Zinc (Zn) addition on the properties of magnesium (Mg) alloys, i.e. Mg–xZn (x = 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10) were investigated. Optical microscopy, scanning Electron Microscope (SEM), tensile and Vickers hardness testing were used for the characterization and evaluation of the microstructure and mechanical properties of the alloys. Electrochemical corrosion measurement was also employed to determine the corrosion resistance of the alloys. The results show that magnesium alloy with 6 wt. % zinc content (denoted as Mg- 6Zn) shows good corrosion resistance and mechanical properties).
Pada masa ini aloi magnesium (Mg) telah digunakan dalam pelbagai aplikasi struktur. Dipercayai bahawa magnesium dan aloinnya telah digunakan dalam bidang bioperubatan. Dalam kajian ini, kasan pertambahan zink (Zn) (2, 4, 6, 8 dan 10% berat) tehadap sifat mekanikal dan kakisan aloi magnesium, Mg-xZn telah dikaji. Analisis menggunakan mikroscop optik, *Scanning Electron Mikroscopy (SEM)*, ujian ketegangan dan kekerasan Vickers telah digunakan bagi pencirian dan penilaian mikrostructur dan sifat mekanikal aloi yang dikaji. Ujian kakisan electrokimia juga telah digunakan untuk menilai sifat rintangan kakisan aloi. Keputusan ujikaji menunjukan bahawa aloi magnesium dengan kandungan 6% berat zink (diwakili dengan Mg-6Zn) memberikan sifat kakaisan dan mekanikal yang baik.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DECLARATION</td>
<td>ii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENT</td>
<td>v</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRAK</td>
<td>vii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>viii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xiii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF APPENDICES</td>
<td>xv</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background 1

1.2 Statement of Problem 3

1.3 Objectives 3

1.4 Scopes 4

## 2 LITRETURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview of Biomaterials 5

2.1.1 Uses for Biomaterials 6
2.1.1.1 Orthopedics 6
2.1.1.2 Cardiovascular Applications 7
2.1.1.3 Ophthalmic 7
2.1.1.4 Dental Applications 7

2.1.2 Types of Biomaterials 7
2.1.2.1 Metallic materials 8
2.1.2.2 Polymers 9
2.1.2.3 Ceramics 9
2.1.2.4 Composites 10

2.1.3 Natural Biomaterials 11

2.1.4 Application of Biomaterials 11

2.2 Natural Bone 12
2.2.1 Desirable Properties of Artificial Bone Material 13
2.2.1.1 Body Condition 13
2.2.1.2 Mechanical Properties 15
2.2.1.3 Corrosion Resistance 15

2.3 Conventional Metallic Materials Used For Medical Devices 16
2.3.1 Stainless steels 17
2.3.2 Cobalt-Base Alloys 17
2.3.3 Titanium and Titanium-Base Alloys 18

2.4 Magnesium 18
2.4.1 Properties of Pure Magnesium 19
2.4.2 Melting and casting of magnesium 20
2.4.2.1 Melting 20
2.4.2.2  Casting and working of magnesium  

2.4.3  Magnesium Alloys  

2.4.3.1 Common Alloying Elements  
    2.4.3.1.1 Aluminum  
    2.4.3.1.2 Calcium  
    2.4.3.1.3 Manganese  
    2.4.3.1.4 Rare Earths  
    2.4.3.1.5 Zinc  

2.5  Zinc Metal  
    2.5.1  Zinc Biological role  

2.6  Researched Biodegradable Magnesium Alloys  

3  RESEARCH METHODOLOGY  

3.1  Introduction  

3.2  Research Design  
    3.2.1  Casting  
    3.2.2  Microstructural Characterization  
    3.2.3  Hardness Test  
    3.2.4  Tensile Test  
    3.2.5  Electrochemical Measurement  

4  RESULTS AND DISCUSSION  

4.1  Selection of optimum zinc addition  
    4.1.1  Nominal Composition Analysis
4.1.2 Microstructural Characterization

4.1.3 Hardness Test

4.1.4 Tensile Test

4.1.5 Corrosion Electrochemical Test

5 CONCLUSION

REFERENCES

APENDIX A-C
### LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE NO.</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Example of Medical and Dental Material and their Applications</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Example of Polymers used as Biomaterials</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Example of Biomaterial Ceramics</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Summary of the mechanical properties and porosity of human bone</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Raw Materials for Magnesium Production</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Nominal chemical composition of the Mg-Zn alloys</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The Tensile strength, Yield, and Elastic Modulus value for Mg-Zn alloys</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE NO.</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Implant material requirements in orthopedic applications</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Hip joint replacement</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Details of the bone structure</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Closed packed structure of pure magnesium</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Flowchart showing the summary of research methodology</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>(a) Magnesium Ingot (b) Pure Zinc</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>(a) Mg-Zn Melting, (b) Pouring into steel mold,</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Designed Mold, (e) cast sample (f) the mold used</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>(a) Olympus BX60, (b) Philips XL 40, (c) Supra 35VP,</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>used for the characterization of the microstructure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>(a) Matsuzawa DVK-2 used for the hardness testing</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) location of the test on the sample</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>Instron universal tensile testing machine used in the tensile</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>testing of the samples</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Electrochemical test (Parstat-2263) set up used for the corrosion</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Measurement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Microstructure of the as cast (a) pure magnesium, (b) Mg-2Zn,</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) Mg-4Zn, (d) Mg-6Zn, (e) Mg-8Zn, (f) Mg-10Zn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 FE-SEM micrographs of (a) Mg-8Zn alloy,
(b) Mg-10Zn Alloy, (c) (Mg, Zn)-containing phase in the grain,
(d) (mg, Zn)-containing phase at the grain boundary 41

4.3 EDS analysis of the secondary phases (a) on the grain,
(b) at the grain boundary 42

4.4 The hardness value of Mg-Zn alloys as a function
of zinc addition 43

4.5 The Tensile strength value of Mg-Zn alloys as a function
of zinc addition. 45

4.6 Electrochemical polarization curves of Mg-Zn alloys
under investigation 46
# LIST OF APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDIX</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Compositional Analysis of the as-cast Samples</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The Stress/Strain Graphs for the alloys Samples</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Polarization Curves of the Samples</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Biomaterial implants are used as a replacement of a bone part or as a support in the healing process. Replacement of a bone part requires implants to stay in the body permanently, while support only requires that the implant remain in the body for a shorter period. When permanent implant is used for a temporary application, additional surgeries are required to remove these devices after the healing process. Thus, removal process increases the patient grim and cost of health care. In contrast, biodegradable materials require no additional surgeries for removal as they dissolve after the healing process is complete. This also eliminates the complications associated with the long-term presence of implants in the body. Finally, after these materials degrade within the body, it is important that the body can metabolized the degradation products, and thus are bioabsorbable.

The first materials to be used as commercial biodegradable and bioabsorbable implant materials were polymers. The most commonly and earliest used absorbable materials include polyglycolic acid (PGA), poly-lactic acid (PLA), and poly-dioxanone (PDS). However, low mechanical properties and radiolucency are the limitation with these materials. Applications of polymeric materials in load-bearing and tissue
supporting applications is severely restricts due to low strength, because the mechanical needs of the body required a greater amount of material.

Metals due to their relatively high strength and fracture toughness possesses desirable mechanical properties, however, most of the metals are biologically toxic. Studies revealed that conventional implant, like cobalt, stainless, chromium, and nickel-based alloys produce corrosion products, which are harmful to the human body [1] [2] [3] [4].

Magnesium and its alloys are biodegradable metals and exhibit improved mechanical properties and corrosion resistance. However most of the reported biomedical magnesium alloys contain aluminum and/or rare earth (RE) elements. It is well known that Al and rare earth elements are harmful to neurons, osteoblasts, and also associated with dementia and could lead to hepatotoxicity. Consequently, Al and RE are unsuitable alloying elements for biomedical magnesium materials, particularly when they are above certain levels [5]

Pure magnesium was indicated as suitable candidate for temporary implant; however, the major drawback of Mg is its low corrosion resistance which results to low mechanical strength in the physiological environment. Alloying elements can be added to increase the strength of pure Mg but alloying elements should be selected carefully to maintain the Mg’s biocompatibility.

With the purpose of searching for suitable alloying elements for biomedical magnesium alloys, researchers demonstrated that Calcium (Ca), Manganese (Mn), and Zinc (Zn) could be appropriate candidates. Zinc is one of the essential elements in human body that also provide mechanical strengthening in Mg-based alloys.

Zinc can improve the corrosion resistance and mechanical properties of magnesium alloys, Zinc additions increase the strength of Mg-based alloys primarily through precipitation strengthening. Furthermore, zinc is one of the most abundant
nutritionally essential elements in the human body, and has basic safety for biomedical applications [6] [7].

1.2 Statement of Problem

The mechanical properties and corrosion resistance of magnesium alloys must be sufficiently investigated for medical application. Magnesium is essential to human metabolic functions and is the fourth most abundant cation in human body. In vitro cytotoxicity of pure magnesium metal showed positive cell proliferation and viability with no sign of growth inhibition. The fracture toughness of magnesium is greater than that of ceramics, but pure magnesium corrodes too quickly in the physiological environment (pH 7.4–7.6), losing mechanical integrity before tissue healing. In an effort to maintain the mechanical integrity, and biocompatibility, more alloying compositions are necessary.

1.3 Objectives

The objectives of this project are:

1. To establish optimum material composition Mg-Zn
2. To establish the effect of Zinc addition on the properties of Mg alloy as biodegradable material
1.4 **Scopes**

This project was conducted within the following boundaries:

1. Mg-Zn alloys was prepared and cast using gravity die casting process
2. The effect of zinc addition was characterized and measured through:

(a) Microstructure observation
(b) Mechanical properties test, and
(c) Electrochemical corrosion tests