

中国激光

选区激光熔化铝合金及其复合材料在航空航天领域的研究进展

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摘要 选区激光熔化(SLM)在航空航天领域精密复杂结构件的制造中极具发展潜力, 它突破了传统制造技术成本高、周期长、精度低等问题, 可更加灵活地实现功能-结构-材料一体化。本文针对航空航天轻量化结构件广泛采用的铝合金及其复合材料的 SLM 技术进行探讨, 并进一步总结了提升 SLM 铝基材料样品力学性能的方法, 包括前期参数优化、成形件后处理和添加增强相。综述了国内外关于 SLM 铝合金在航空航天领域的研究进展、具体应用及其成果展示, 并探讨了其未来的发展前景。

关键词 激光技术; 激光 3D 打印; 选区激光熔化; 铝合金; 航空航天

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1 引言

激光 3D 打印技术是高端智能制造技术——增材制造(AM)的一种, 该技术采用激光作为热源, 以层层叠加的方式, 实现了从无到有、从小到大的零件制造, 具有适用材料广、结构高度可设计、成形样品精度较高、力学性能好、制造周期短等优势, 目前已经被应用于航空航天领域支架结构、光机结构件的研发和生产中^[1-2]。AM 这一概念由美国科学家 Housholder^[3]于 1979 年提出。20 世纪 80 年代中期, Deckard 博士^[4]开发了“激光选区烧结技术”并获得专利, AM 自此开始崭露头角, 并被命名为“快速成形技术”。20 世纪 80 年代后期, AM 被成功推向市场并开始商业化。

AM 是基于“离散叠加”的制造过程, 流程简洁, 原理却具有颠覆性。它省去了传统减材制造中复杂繁琐的加工工序, 集人工智能、材料科学和数字化技术于一体, 仅需一台设备就可以制造出具有复杂结构的零部件, 解决了传统制造中复杂样品难以加工以及薄壁结构难以成形的问题, 在一定程度上实现

了“自由制造”, 具有高度柔性以及零件整合功能^[5]。

AM 工艺在先进制造领域快速发展, 在航空航天领域被认为是具有突破性进展的核心技术, 各国争相发展该技术, 力求占领打造完整产业链的技术高地^[6]。德国开展了关于打印热塑性材料在卫星领域的适用性研究, 美国则利用 AM 工艺直接制造金属卫星器件。近年来, 我国科学技术部启动了国家重点研发计划“增材制造和激光制造”, 工业和信息化部又印发了“增材制造产业发展行动计划(2017—2020)”的通知, 经过快速发展, 我国有望打造一个 3D 打印技术与纳米技术并驾齐驱、吸引众多资本的市场^[7]。2018 年我国嫦娥四号中继卫星“鹊桥”的成功发射(实现了 3D 打印部件的在轨应用)^[8], 以及之后的钛合金大型整体主承力结构件的激光快速成形^[9], 都标志着 AM 在我国航空航天领域的研究正处于蓬勃发展阶段。

铝合金及其复合材料因具有良好的导热性、导电性、延展性、塑性、耐蚀性以及密度较小等优异的物化性能, 而被大量应用于飞机机身蒙皮材料、发动机、油箱、壁板、支架和金属反射镜等航空航天领域

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重要零部件的制造之中^[10-13]。我国的长征一号、二号、三号、四号火箭的结构材料也多为铝合金,铝合金用量达到了70%,是除钛合金、镍合金以外,应用在航空航天领域的另一种经典金属材料^[14]。轻量化是衡量先进性的重要指标,例如飞机内部零件的重量每减少1%,其性能可提高4%。欧洲航天局(ESA)利用AM技术对太空望远镜内部结构进行镂空设计,采用铝合金制造出了新型镜组,该镜组减重73%,不但节约了原料,还兼具顶级光学仪器的必要功能^[15]。由此可知,AM的技术优势结合铝合金性能特点在航空航天领域的发展具有无限潜力。

传统的铝合金加工存在着铸态强度较低、制造周期长、复杂结构难以成形和材料浪费等问题,无法满足航空航天对铝合金构件制造技术高效、快速的要求,缺乏生产复杂精密结构的灵活性以及随设计变化的快速响应能力^[16-17]。在此迫切需求的驱动下,AM铝合金得以创新发展。激光3D打印铝合金结合了AM及激光工艺的特点,突破了传统铸造铝合金的缺陷,具有以下五大优势^[18-21]:

1) 高度柔性设计。基于离散-堆积数字化成形原理,不需要模具,对复杂精密零件的生产制造具有灵活适应性,经过点阵结构和拓扑优化设计可以达到减重和节约原材料的目的。

2) 加工过程精简。工艺流程大体可分为三个阶段,即前处理、分层叠加成形以及后处理。此外,由于激光3D打印工艺的限制较少,可在产品设计环节进行优化和重塑,与传统方法相比,在降低工艺难度和时间成本的同时缩短了加工周期。

3) 结构一体化。可整合诸多部件于一体,减少零件数量,提高零件的使用寿命,实现结构功能一体化。

4) 材料利用率高。激光在规定的区域内对耗材进行加工,避免了传统模式下边角料浪费的问题,大大提高了材料的利用率,节约了粉末耗材等直接成本。

5) 力学性能较好。打印过程中,熔池较高的冷却速度抑制了晶粒的长大和合金元素的偏析,形成了细晶和固溶协同强化,相比传统的铸造零件,力学性能得以提升。

铝合金及其复合材料在激光3D打印领域是典型的难加工材料,其发展较钛合金、镍合金晚,加工难度更高,且无广泛的工艺适用性^[17]。其根本原因在于铝合金具有激光反射率高、热导率高、易氧化和密度低等物理特性,导致其在激光打印过程中存在

激光吸收率低、熔池内液相黏度较大、球化缺陷、粉末流动性较差等问题,因而对铺粉系统和激光功率的要求较高^[22-24]。但最近几年随着大功率光纤激光器设备的不断更新和投入使用,以及国内外对铝合金研究的不断增加,铝合金的选区激光熔化(SLM)取得了一些进展。但SLM铝合金及其复合材料种类相对较少,且多为AlSi系,抗拉强度难以突破400 MPa,从而在一定程度上限制了其在高承载、高服役性能构件上的应用^[25-26]。

本文主要分析了AM与传统铸造方式相比所具有的独特优势,阐述了激光选区烧结(SLS)、SLM和激光熔化沉积(LMD)三种激光3D打印技术的原理及特点。SLM是制造铝合金及其复合材料精密航空构件的主流工艺,因此,本文重点分析归纳了SLM铝合金及其复合材料性能优化的国内外研究现状,以及其在航空航天领域的具体应用。

2 激光3D打印技术的原理及特点

激光3D打印中基于激光与粉末的制造技术是较为经典的成形工艺,也是应用在航空航天领域的主要工艺,主要包括两类不同的送粉方式。一类是以“铺粉”为传送方式的3D打印技术,包括SLS和SLM。SLS工作原理如图1所示,首先将三维模型转换成AM领域的STL格式文件,接着对打印方向进行选择,再进行切片处理生成多个二维数据。在粉末预热后,激光按照规定的二维轨迹进行烧结,反复叠加成形,在几小时内便能实现从平面图到实体的转换。SLS技术可以直接制造出结构复杂的零件,加工周期短,耗材利用率高,材料适用范围广,无需额外的支撑结构设计^[27]。其不足之处在于成形件的表面粗糙度高、内部多孔严重,影响了成形件的

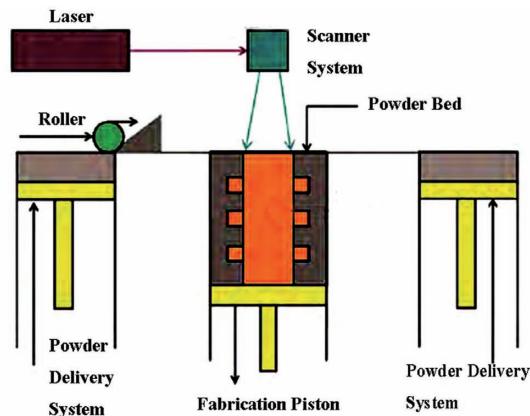


图1 SLS工作原理图^[28]

Fig. 1 Schematic of SLS^[28]

致密性,从而导致成形件的力学性能较差^[28]。

SLM是以“铺粉”为传送方式中最具有代表性的一种技术,它是在SLS的基础上开发的,并对SLS中存在的加工精度较差的缺陷进行了改善(图2为SLM原理图),是目前AM领域中研究和应用均较为理想的一种技术^[29-31]。SLM与SLS两者的工艺流程大体相同,最大的区别在于SLS属于烧结过程,耗材是低熔点材料与金属粉末的混合物,通过激光熔化部分低熔点粉末来黏结金属粉末,因此该工艺成形的零件往往内部多孔、表面粗糙、力学性能较差;而SLM工艺无需任何黏结剂,激光直接照射在金属粉末上使其熔化后凝固成形,制备的零件的致密性较高,力学性能比SLS制备的更有优势^[32]。

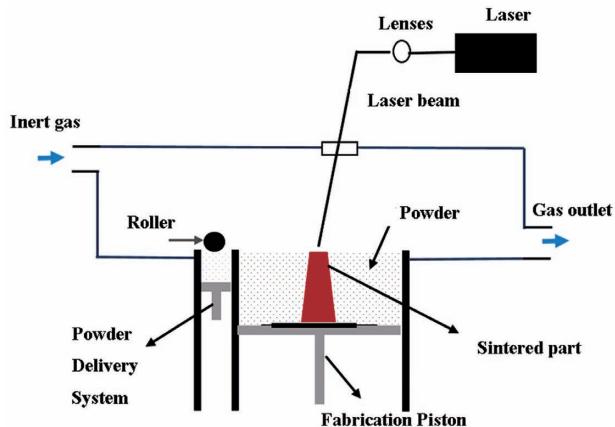


图2 SLM原理图

Fig. 2 Schematic of SLM

另一类是LMD,它起源于美国的激光近净成形^[33],我国西北工业大学将其命名为激光立体成形技术^[34]。此技术与SLM、SLS的区别在于LMD基于喷嘴同步送粉,逐渐沉积成形。LMD的工作原理见图3。此工艺的速度快,适合大体积零部件的制造,但其沉积的粉层较厚,为毫米级别,成形件表面

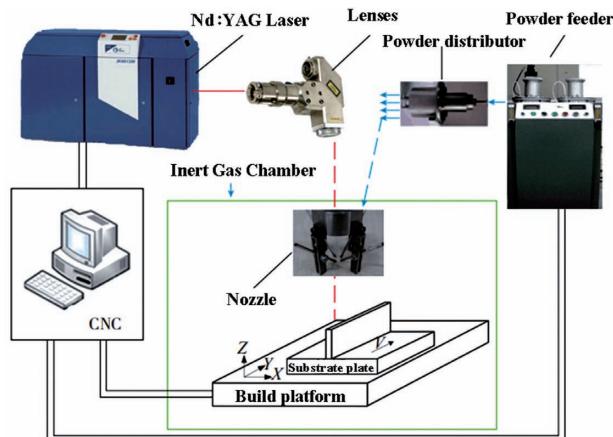


图3 LMD工作原理图^[35]

Fig. 3 Schematic diagram of LMD^[35]

粗糙,需要进行后续处理,以提高其精度^[35]。

表1是三种打印技术的比较。对于成形件的尺寸精度而言,采用“铺粉”的送料方式要好于“同轴送粉”,而对于内部复杂的轻量化结构设计的零件来说,采用“铺粉”的方式才可制造出多孔、形状复杂的零件。在“铺粉”方式中,SLM所表现的精度与性能最佳,因此当前的铝合金AM研究大多是基于SLM工艺进行的。相对于SLS和LMD技术,SLM在航空航天零部件的制造上具有高精度(表面质量较高,经过简单的后处理即可达到使用精度)、高性能(拉伸性能可超过铸件,达到锻件水准)、精细减重结构(可打印内部精细的减重结构)制备等优势,已被广泛应用于铝合金及其复合材料精密航空构件的制造^[36-37]。因此,本文下述关于激光3D打印铝合金及其复合材料在航空航天领域的性能分析、应用研究等,都是围绕SLM这一具有良好成形质量的工艺进行的;但SLM面临的零件尺寸与打印效率等问题,是其应用于大规模制造面临的一大挑战。

表1 三种主流激光3D打印技术的对比^[36-37]

Table 1 Comparison of three laser 3D printing technologies^[36-37]

Item	SLM	SLS	LMD
Speed	Slow	Slow	Fast
Accuracy	High	Average	Low
Cost	High	Average	Low
Support structure	Yes	No	No
Material	Metal/alloy	Metals/ceramics/thermoplastic	Metal
Size	Small	Small	Large
Faults	Small size/low efficiency/high cost	Low strength/rough surface	Low precision/need subsequent processing

3 SLM 铝合金及其复合材料的工艺特点

金属铝的特点包括:1)密度低;2)良好的导电、导热以及延展性;3)表面具有耐蚀性氧化膜;4)良好的吸音性能;5)对光的反射率高^[38-39]。一般情况下,纯铝的强度很低,因而人们常通过添加其他元素形成合金来增强其性能。常用来强化纯铝的合金元素有 Cu、Mn、Si、Mg、Zn、Li、Sb、Ti、Cr、Co、Fe、Bi 等。添加 Mn 和 Sb 元素是为了增强耐蚀性;添加 Ti 和 Cr 元素是为了细化晶粒;添加 Ni 元素是为了提高热强度;添加 Co、Fe 和 Bi 是为了提高可加工性^[40-41]。Si 是铝合金中重要的溶质之一,Al-Si 合金以其轻量化、高刚度以及良好的流动性被广泛应用于汽车及航空航天领域^[42]。图 4 为 Al-Si 合金相图。当 Si 的质量分数为 12.6%、温度为 577 °C 时发生共晶反应,合金的力学性能主要受共晶 Si 在铝基体中的分布及其形貌的影响^[40,43]。目前,基于铝合金材料的激光 3D 打印研究及应用多集中于 SLM 工艺上,材料也多为 Al-Si 系,其发展的动力在于价格低廉,而且其性能使其或可替代昂贵的中温钛合金,这一极具前景的潜力使 SLM 铝合金在各行业发展迅速^[44-51]。

3.1 SLM 铝合金及其参数优化

2012 年,Kempen 等^[25]对 Al-Si 合金进行了 SLM 成形,结果表明,采用 SLM 成形的 Al-Si 合金

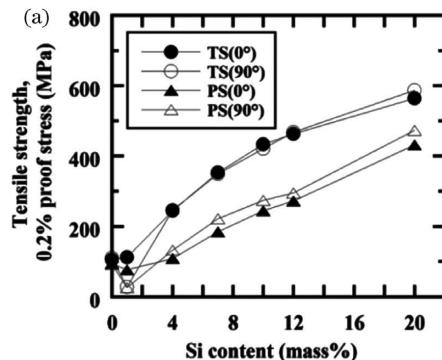


图 5 Si 含量对 Al-Si 二元合金 SLM 构件力学性能的影响^[52]。(a) 使用最佳激光扫描参数制备的 Al-Si SLM 样品的抗拉强度及屈服强度;(b) 使用最佳激光扫描参数制备的 Al-Si SLM 样品的延伸率

Fig. 5 Effect of Si content on mechanical properties of Al-Si binary alloy SLM components^[52]. (a) Tensile strength and proof stress of Al-Si SLM samples fabricated using the optimal laser scanning parameters; (b) breaking elongation of Al-Si SLM samples fabricated using the optimal laser scanning parameters

Kempen 等^[54]在参数优化的试验中研究了激光功率 P 为 170~200 W、扫描速度 v 为 200~1400 mm/s 时,单道 AlSi10Mg 的形貌变化规律。AlSi10Mg 单道上表面形貌以及截面形貌如图 6、

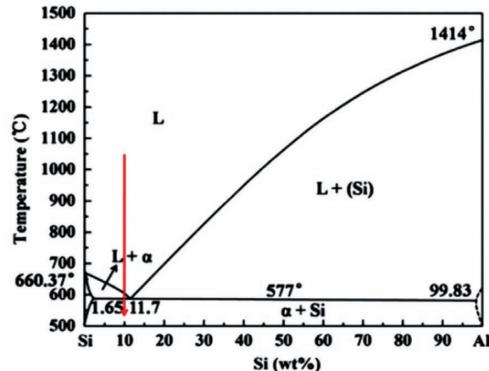


图 4 Al-Si 合金相图^[39]

Fig. 4 Phase diagram of Al-Si alloy^[39]

零件具有更好的力学性能。对于 Al-Si 合金来说,Si 掺杂量的不同也会在很大程度上影响零件的性能。Kimura 等^[52]研究了 Si 含量对 Al-Si 二元合金 SLM 构件力学性能的影响,结果发现,随 Si 含量的增加,形成的共晶 Si 能够有效阻碍位错运动,提升合金的屈服强度及抗拉强度,但延伸率会不可避免地有所下降。图 5 展示了成形件强度和延伸率随 Al-Si 合金中 Si 含量的变化情况,可见:抗拉强度表现为随 Si 含量增加而增大,当 Si 的质量分数为 20% 时,抗拉强度最高可达 550 MPa;当 Si 的质量分数为 4% 时,延伸率最高可超过 20%;当 Si 的质量分数超过 4% 时,延伸率随 Si 含量的增加呈现下降趋势,Al-20% Si 的延伸率仅为 2%~4%。Khosravani 等^[53]在分析了大量的数据后认为,AM 构件的断裂行为可能受填充模式以及内部缺陷的影响。

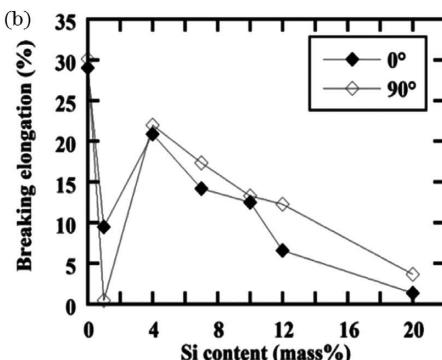
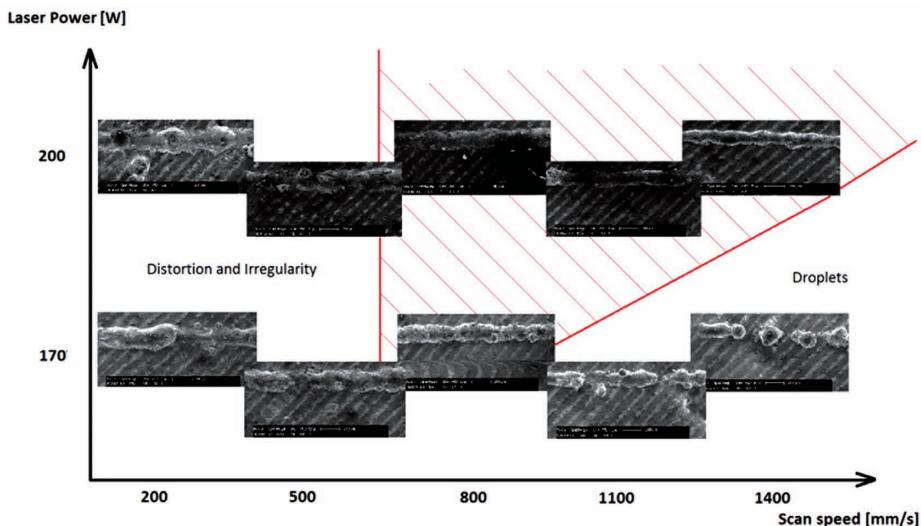
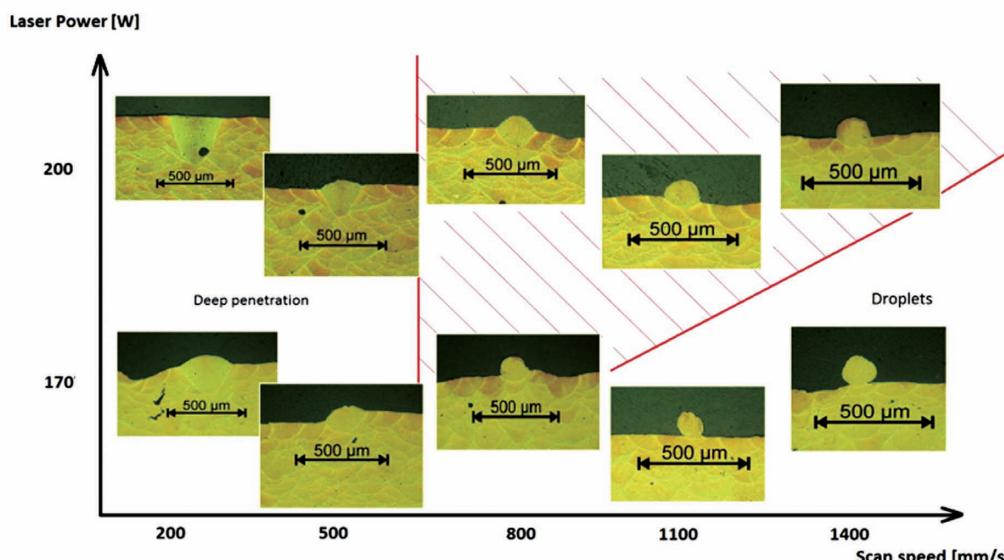


图 7 所示。当 P 与 v 的比值较高时,会导致严重的金属蒸发和等离子体形成,在熔池底部产生了一个空腔,从而产生了较大的熔池高度和纵横比(图 7 左上),此为锁孔传导模式;而当 P 与 v 的比值较小

图 6 SLM AlSi10Mg 单道扫描的上表面形貌以及加工参数窗口^[54]Fig. 6 Top view of single track of selective laser melted AlSi10Mg and process window^[54]图 7 SLM AlSi10Mg 单道扫描的截面形貌以及加工参数窗口^[54]Fig. 7 Cross-sectional view of single track of selective laser melted AlSi10Mg and process window^[54]

时,粉末不足以完全熔化,或尽管可以熔化,但此区域的熔池难有一定深度,堆垛方向的搭接不足,根据流体力学,熔融轨道易分解成小水滴,形成球状(图 7 右下);只有 P 与 v 的比值适中时,大部分激光才能被熔池上部分吸收,熔池的纵横比小,此为热传导模式,单道表面形貌和致密度均较好(图 6、7 最佳窗口)^[41,55]。

3.2 SLM 铝合金的后处理

沉积态铝合金由于固溶强化和晶粒细化,其成形件的强度普遍高于铸态,但综合来看,Al-Si 合金抗拉强度突破 400~500 MPa,硬度突破 150 HV 依旧有较大难度,从而限制了其在航空航天主承力结构件上的应用。为进一步提升成形件的力学性能,

还需要配合后期的热处理和重熔(LSR)等工艺^[56-57]。

采用适当的热处理方法可以有效消除成形件内部的残余应力及气孔,消除元素的微观偏析,并恢复一定程度的延伸性^[58-59]。热处理中的退火(An)、基底预热(HP)、时效(Ag)、去应力退火(T2)、固溶+自然时效(T4)、固溶+不完全人工时效(T5)和固溶+完全人工时效(T6)已被广泛用于消除铝合金的残余应力以及提高铝合金的综合性能^[60]。

Wang 等^[61]对 SLM 成形的 Al-3.5Cu-1.5Mg-1Si 铝合金进行了热处理,结果发现, T6 热处理态样品的屈服强度为 (368 ± 6) MPa, 抗拉强度为 (455 ± 10) MPa, 延伸率为 $(6.2 \pm 1.8)\%$, 均高于沉

积态样品[沉积态样品的屈服强度为(223±4) MPa、抗拉强度为(366±7) MPa,延伸率为(5.3±0.3)%]。这主要归因于T6处理后生成的Al₂Cu(Mg)针状纳米沉淀相,沉淀相的存在增大了成形件的强度^[62]。但经过T6处理的样品,虽然位错减少、亚晶粒消失,但却出现了Mg₂Si和Al_xMn_y相,使得样品的塑性依旧受限,因而其延伸率并没有明显增加。

目前,大多数SLM成形铝合金的热处理工艺多是沿用传统铸件的热处理方式^[38],但SLM构件与传统铸造件具有不同的组织结构,采用传统铸件的热处理方式是否合适值得探讨。Aboulkhair等^[63]研究T6热处理对AlSi10Mg力学性能的影响,结果发现T6热处理虽然改善了样品的延伸率,

但却使零件表面发生软化,晶粒粗化,降低了零件的强度和硬度。而在实际应用中,强度、硬度等性能在零件寿命和结构设计等方面至关重要,因此开发有针对性的热处理工艺极有必要^[64-65]。

在热处理无法有效改善成形件硬度的情况下,Han等^[64]采用表面重熔(LSR)的方式对零件进行后处理,结果发现重熔消除了成形件表面的球化现象,使其表面粗糙度由19.3 μm降为0.93 μm,并且细化了成形件的微观结构,增大了成形件的显微硬度。图8分别为沉积态和热处理态试样的拉伸应力-应变曲线以及沉积态、热处理态和表面重熔态试样的显微硬度,可以看出,重熔处理使样品的显微硬度提高了约19.5%,热处理将延伸率从6%提升至22%。

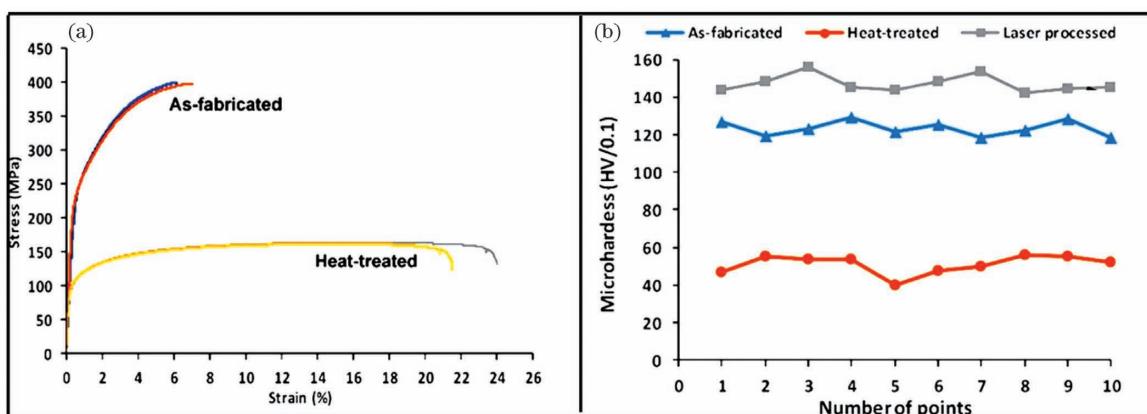


图8 拉伸应力-应变曲线以及显微硬度^[64]。(a)沉积态和热处理态试样的拉伸应力-应变曲线;(b)沉积态、热处理态、表面重熔态试样的显微硬度

Fig. 8 Tensile stress-strain curves and microhardness^[64]. (a) Tensile stress-strain curves of as-fabricated and heat-treated samples; (b) microhardness of as-fabricated, heat-treated, and LSR-processed samples

3.3 SLM铝基复合材料的力学性能

在航空航天领域,某些关键结构部件需要综合性能优异(轻量化、高强度、高模量、高尺寸稳定性、高导热、高耐磨、高阻尼、抗辐照等)的材料的支撑,但常用的钢、钛等材料的密度大且导热性能较差,而轻质铝合金的刚性和耐磨性又不足^[66]。金属基复合材料结合了金属(延展性和韧性)和陶瓷等增强相(高强度和高模量)的特性,是使基体强化的有效途径和极端环境中极具应用潜力的材料^[67-69]。铝基复合材料就是其中的一类,它具有低密度、高刚性和强度、优异的耐磨性、受控的热膨胀系数以及更高的抗疲劳性能^[70-73],而纳米SiC、Al₂O₃、TiN、TiB₂、ZrO₂、SiO₂和石墨颗粒等是其广泛使用的增强相^[74-76]。铝基复合材料已被用于设计各种高级应用组件,并被广泛应用于航天器结构本体、辅助结构、精密光机载荷结构中。

SLM与传统的加工方式相比有很多优点,但仍存在打印过程中激光反射率较高以及成形件的塑性、强度、耐蚀性、耐磨性不足等问题,使得SLM铝合金在航空航天等领域的应用受到了限制。铝基复合材料的出现改善了这一现象。Gao等^[77]利用SLM技术成形了TiN/AlSi10Mg纳米复合材料,对其进行研究后发现:它可使激光反射率从基体的62%降至25%,样品可在100 W的低激光功率下成形;随着TiN添加量的增加,样品的微观结构显著细化,硬度从126 HV增加到145 HV。

Gao等^[73]还证实了TiN纳米颗粒会使TiN/AlSi10Mg复合材料在SLM过程中发生连续异质形核、 α -Al再结晶以及钉扎晶界等现象,从而显著细化微观结构。TiN含量不同的TiN/AlSi10Mg复合材料的力学性能如图9所示,可以看出,当TiN的质量分数为4%时,SLM铝基复合材料表现出了

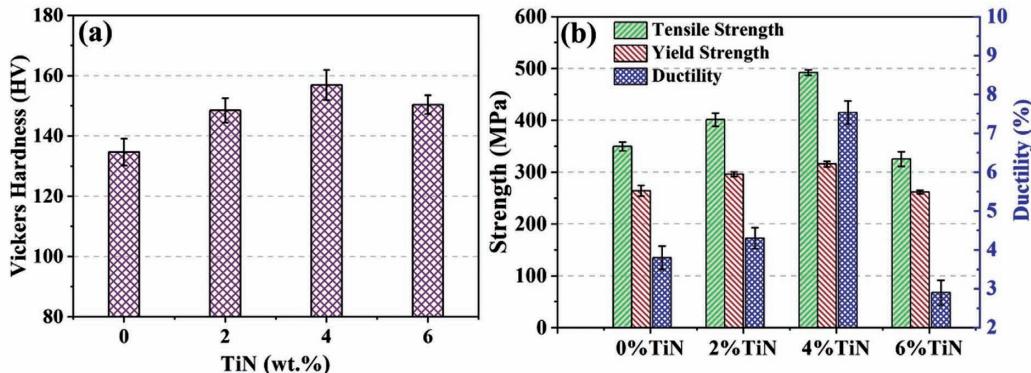
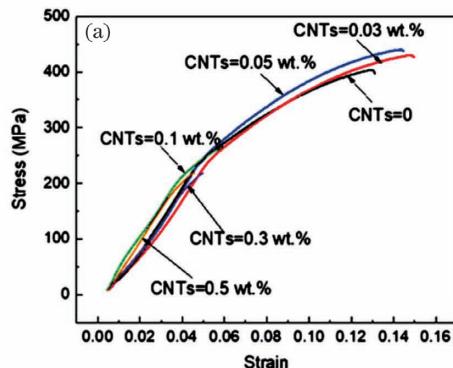


图 9 TiN 含量不同的 TiN/AlSi10Mg 复合材料的力学性能^[73]。(a) 显微硬度; (b) 屈服强度、抗拉强度以及延展性

Fig. 9 Mechanical properties of TiN/AlSi10Mg composites with different TiN contents^[73]. (a) Microhardness; (b) yield and tensile strength as well as ductility

最高的强度、延展性和硬度,抗拉强度、延伸率和显微硬度分别为(492±5.5) MPa、(7.5±0.29)% 和(157±4.9) HV。文献认为,TiN/AlSi10Mg 纳米复合材料粉末良好的球形形貌、TiN 纳米颗粒固有的高激光吸收能力以及增加的反射组合激光束的共同作用,克服了铝合金固有的高激光反射率的缺陷,进而提高了 TiN/AlSi10Mg 复合粉末的 SLM 工艺性。

Liu 等^[78]研究了 SLM 制备的碳纳米管(CNT)



含量不同的 CNT-AlSi10Mg 复合材料的性能,图 10 给出了该复合材料的应力-应变曲线和抗拉强度(UTS)。当 CNT 的质量分数为 0~0.05% 时,由于晶粒细化和晶界强化等的共同作用,抗拉强度随 CNT 质量分数的增加而增大,0.05% CNT-AlSi10Mg 的抗拉强度为(441.2±0.9) MPa;当 CNT 的质量分数大于 0.05% 时,复合材料内的孔洞数量和尺寸变大,强度显著降低,因此抗拉强度随 CNT 质量分数的增加而减小。

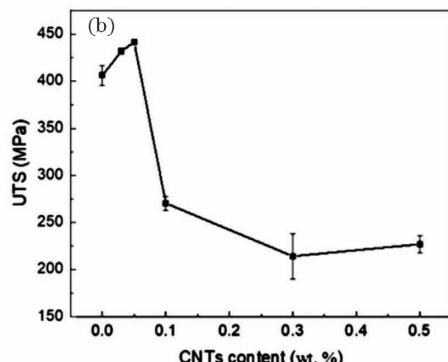


图 10 CNT 含量不同的 SLM CNT-AlSi10Mg 样品的应力-应变曲线和抗拉强度^[78]。(a) 应力-应变曲线;

Fig. 10 Stress-strain curves and tensile strength of SLM CNT-AlSi10Mg samples with different contents of CNT^[78].

(a) Stress-strain curves ; (b) tensile strength

表 2 总结了 SLM 铝合金及其复合材料的力学性能。通过大量的研究结果可知,复合材料具有一定的增强效果,使 Al-Si 合金的抗拉强度得以突破 400 MPa,拓展了其在航空设备主承力构件上的应用。铝基复合材料的增强机理主要有以下几点:1) 纳米颗粒的钉扎作用,抑制了晶粒长大,使复合材料实现细晶强化^[79]。2) 增强相与基体发生原位反应,增强了界面结合力,提高了材料的综合力学性能^[80]。3) 陶瓷增强相可以改善其与铝合金界面的结合性和湿润性,减少了界面处的孔洞和裂纹缺陷。

4) 打印过程中较快的冷却速率导致了较大的温度梯度,从而产生了马朗戈尼效应,引起了液体的热毛细管力,该力反过来作用于熔池中的增强颗粒,使增强相弥散强化;另外,热毛细管力有利于减少打印过程中的孔洞,减少缺陷的产生^[81]。

上述 SLM 铝基复合材料虽然在性能提升方面具有一定的优势,但依旧存在着一些问题,比如:粉末颗粒过小发生团聚;增强相与基体对激光的吸收率不同,引起了二者热力学行为的差异;增强相与基体原位反应后,外源颗粒仍会影响二者的界面结合。因

此,研究人员或可从以下几个方面着手来改善 SLM 铝基复合材料的力学性能:1)制备高性能粉末材料,为零件的良好成形提供良好的基础;2)通过 SLM 工

艺调控改善成形件的内部组织,提升其力学性能;3)通过纳米复合、原位增强及控制界面反应实现强韧化;4)利用后续处理进一步强化成形件的性能。

表 2 国内外关于铝合金及其复合材料 AM 工艺性能的研究情况

Table 2 Domestic and international research on AM process of aluminum alloys and aluminum matrix composites

Material	Method	Heat treatment	Tensile strength / MPa	Elongation / %	Hardness / HV	Ref.
Al-Si20	SLM	—	550	2.0~4.0	—	[52]
AlSi10Mg	SLM	—	446	8.09	209	[82]
AlSi10Mg	SLM	160 °C / 4 h	493	8.6	134	[83]
AlSi10Mg	SLM	540 °C / 1 h + 160 °C / 4 h	323	15.3	—	[83]
Al-Cu-Mg	SLM	—	402	6.0 ± 1.4	—	[84]
Al-Cu-Mg	SLM	T6	455 ± 10	6.2 ± 1.8	—	[85]
AlSi10Mg	SLM	—	333 ± 15	1.4 ± 0.3	125 ± 1	[86]
AlSi10Mg	SLM	T6	292 ± 4	3.9 ± 0.5	100 ± 1	[86]
AlSi10Mg	SLM	—	—	6.0	123	[63]
AlSi10Mg	SLM	T6	—	22.0	51	[63]
CNT-AlSi10Mg	SLM	—	441.2 ± 0.9	—	—	[78]
TiC-AlSi10Mg	SLM	—	482	10.8	185	[76]
TiN-AlSi10Mg	SLM	—	492 ± 5.5	7.5 ± 0.29	157 ± 4.9	[77]
TiN-Al7075	LPBF	—	—	36.0 ± 1.5	138 ± 4.7	[79]
TiB ₂ -AlSi10Mg	SLM	T6	530	15.5	—	[80]

Notes: LPBF means laser powder bed fusion.

4 SLM 铝合金在航天领域的应用及发展趋势

光学系统是太空飞行器中用来收集信息的重要部分,其中的金属反射镜不可或缺,并在大型太空望远镜、纳米卫星、激光雷达系统、光谱仪和扫描仪等系统中被广泛应用^[87-88]。AlSi12 和 AlSi40 等高硅合金因能与光学图层 NiP 热匹配并减少了双金属弯曲,而被用于服役环境恶劣的航天光学仪器^[87,89]中。考虑到飞行器升空的情况,人们普遍认为重量

是空间光学系统的重要影响因素^[90-91]。德国 Fraunhofer 研究所^[92]通过 SLM 工艺,利用 AlSi40 过共晶硅铝合金粉末制造出了超轻量化的金属反射镜,如图 11 所示,其封闭式的内部镂空结构极大地提高了反射镜的减重效果和稳定性,实现了 3D 打印光机件的新型结构设计;对于采用 SLM 工艺制备的金属反射镜,后期通过金刚石车削、电镀镍和抛光技术可以实现表面粗糙度值低于 1 nm,该反射镜在标准环境下的两年存储期内具有良好的尺寸稳定性^[93]。

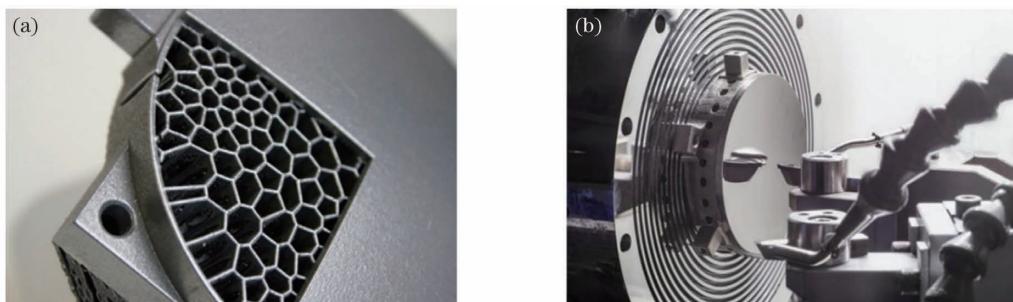


图 11 德国 Fraunhofer 研究所采用 SLM 工艺制造的轻量化金属反射镜^[92]。(a)反射镜内部的中空结构;(b)反射镜实物图

Fig. 11 Lightweight metal mirror manufactured by Fraunhofer Institute in Germany using SLM technology^[92].

(a) Hollow structure inside the mirror; (b) physical diagram of the mirror

Tan 等^[94] 基于现代航空所用光学折叠系统对反射镜体积和重量的要求, 提出了一种基于 SLM 技术的铝反射镜设计和制造方法工艺链。其成品反射镜表面形状偏差为 0.384λ (峰谷值 PV) 和 0.093λ (均方根 RMS)($\lambda = 632.8 \text{ nm}$), 镜子的表

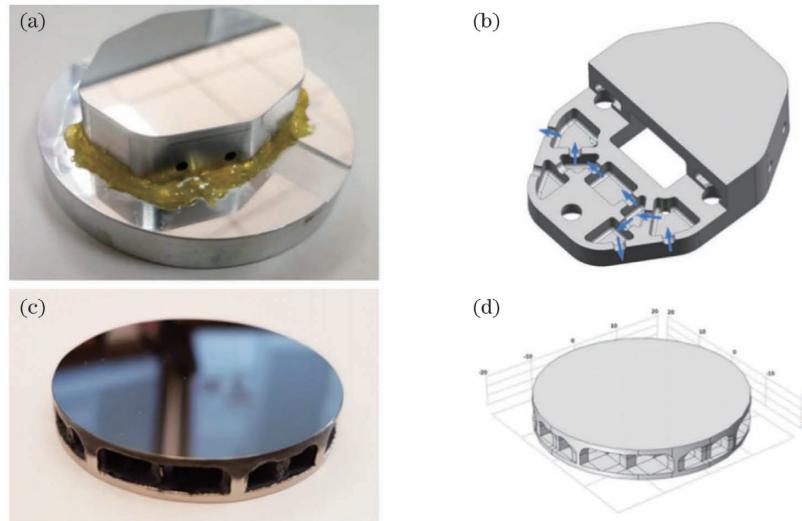


图 12 SLM 轻量化光学反射镜^[93-94]。(a) SLM 反射镜实物图;(b) SLM 反射镜的内部结构图;(c) SLM 反射镜实物图;(d) SLM 反射镜结构图

Fig. 12 Light weighted SLM mirrors^[93-94]. (a) Physical diagram of SLM mirror; (b) internal structure of SLM mirror; (c) physical diagram of SLM mirror; (d) structure diagram of SLM mirror

2015 年,空中客车防务集团称利用 SLM 工艺生产了第一个应用于 Eurostar E3000 卫星遥测和遥控天线的航空级铝合金结构支架(该支架无法使用常规制造方法完成),如图 13 所示,它整合了包括

面粗糙度(R_a)优于 8 nm 。在热循环测试之后,其表面质量没有显著变化,可以满足航空环境适应性的基本要求。图 12 为轻量化光学反射镜的三维模型以及采用 SLM 工艺打印成形的反射镜示意图。

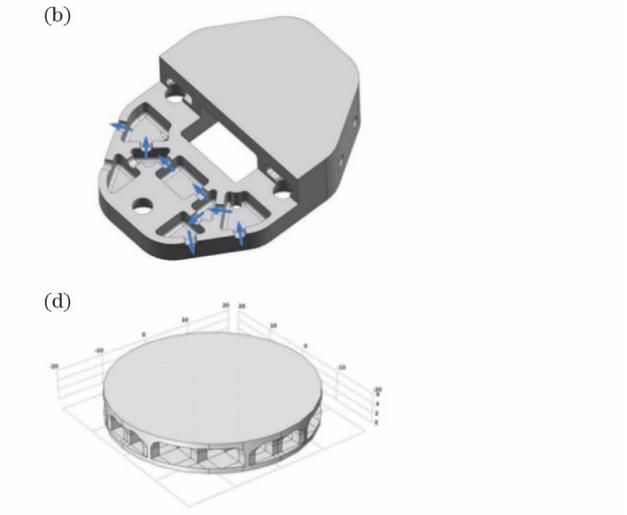


图 13 SLM 铝制航空级结构支架^[95]

Fig. 13 Aluminum alloy aviation grade structural support printed with SLM^[95]

至 2017 年,航空航天制造商 Thales Alenia Space 公司开展的地球静止轨道卫星平台(Spacebus Neo)项目,已经实现了近百个金属 3D 打印件的在轨应用,其中包括 SLM 工艺打印的铝合金天线支架。Spacebus Neo 配备了 4 个 3D 打印的铝合金反作用轮支架[如图 14(a)所示],该支架

44 颗铆钉的 4 个独立部件,重量较以前的托架减少了 35%,硬度提升了 40%,同时避免了材料的浪费,为推进 SLM 技术在航空航天领域的应用起到了示范和引领作用^[95]。



安装在卫星部件上[如图 14(b)所示],旨在满足市场对成本的更低要求。Thales Alenia Space 还与法国 Poly-Shape SAS 公司共同为韩国的通信卫星提供增材制造的天线支架,支架结构整体采用仿生设计,相比之前的加工工艺,增材制造支架成本下降了 30%,重量减少了 22%^[8,96]。

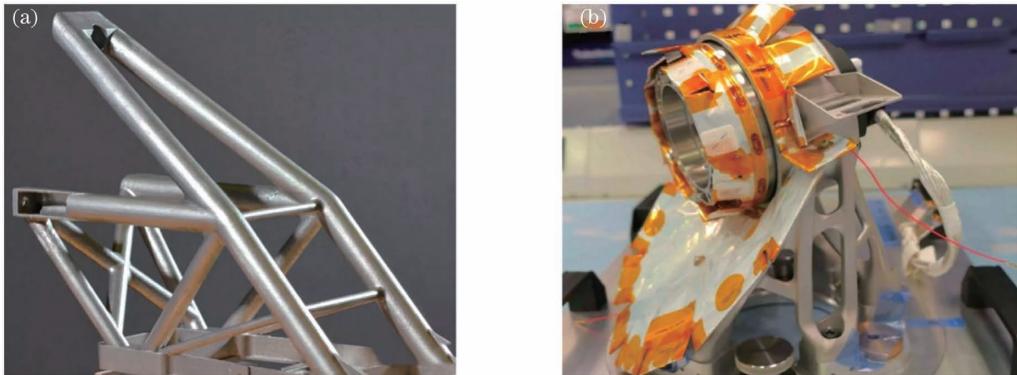


图 14 Thales Alenia Space 采用 SLM 工艺打印的铝合金天线支架^[8]。(a) 铝合金天线支架;(b) 支架安装在卫星部件上

Fig. 14 Aluminum alloy antenna bracket printed with SLM by Thales Alenia Space^[8]. (a) Aluminum alloy antenna bracket; (b) the bracket is mounted on the satellite component

苏州倍丰激光科技有限公司开发出了 Al250C 高强高韧 AM 专用铝合金粉末材料, 其屈服强度可达 580 MPa, 抗拉强度在 590 MPa 以上, 延伸率为 11%; 采用该材料制备的构件通过了 250 °C 高温下持续 5000 h 的稳定性试验, 可替代传统钛合金制造的中温构件^[97]。该公司以 Al250C 为原材料采用 SLM 工艺制造了世界上第一台全尺寸 3D 打印飞机发动机, 其开发时间相比传统制造方式缩短了 75%, 交货时间缩短了 50%。图 15 为 SLM Al250C 飞机发动机构件。

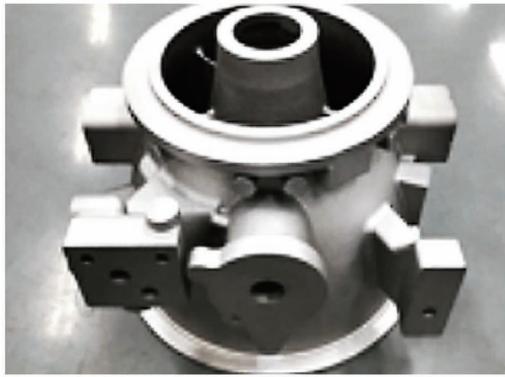


图 15 SLM Al250C 飞机发动机构件^[97]

Fig. 15 AL250C aircraft engine components printed with SLM^[97]

航空航天的发展离不开兼具轻量化、一体化、高性能且制备工艺简单的铝合金构件, 而 SLM 为其制造提供了新的途径, 不但可以成形传统工艺制造难度较大的零构件, 还可以满足航天领域对金属件低成本、快速交付、轻量化、高精度及材料功能一体化的要求。未来, SLM 铝合金及其复合材料构件在航空航天领域或将向着以下几个方向发展:

1) 结合完整拓扑优化实现高性能设计。拓扑优化用于查找组件的最佳结构形状, 在保证一定约

束的情况下获取最优性能, 已被广泛用于空间遥感领域结构的优化设计^[98]。拓扑优化结构复杂的特点恰好契合了 AM 高度柔性的优势, 将其与 SLM 相结合可以实现结构创新设计与制造一体化^[99]。

2) 缺损零件的智能修复, 实现失效零件的快速、低成本再制造。高成本零件的修复是 SLM 技术的另一优势。SLM 修复技术具有修复工序简单、修复周期短、不受零部件损伤程度的限制, 可以对金属部件的缺失、损坏部位进行修复, 而且具备解决突发状况的能力, 能够实现航空航天零部件的可维护性。

3) 高体积分数铝基复合材料的打印。高体积分数颗粒增强铝基复合材料具有热导率高、密度小和力学性能较好等优点, 采用 SLM 可直接成形一体化复杂结构, 无需后续加工。通过进一步的参数优化可以严格把控界面反应, 增强纳米颗粒与铝基体之间的强界面结合能力。强界面结合能力与弥散分布的纳米增强颗粒、激光作用下的超细晶粒的共同作用, 使得成形零件相对于传统铸造件的力学性能得以大幅提升, 获得兼具良好热学性能及力学性能的零部件^[100]。

4) 空间在轨打印。大型航天器结构件一般采用可展开结构, 地面建造完成后折叠放入运载火箭保护罩内, 入轨后展开, 不仅结构尺寸受保护罩体积与载荷的限制, 而且耗资较大^[101]。在空间站安装 3D 打印设备, 可在空间高辐射、高温差的恶劣环境下完成复杂的打印任务, 实现大尺寸功能构件的空间制造、高效资源利用与原位制造, 提高空间飞行器等的在轨保障能力, 对我国的空间探索具有十分重要的推动作用。

5 结束语

铝合金 SLM 技术发展迅速, 已进入实用阶段,

在航空航天制造领域的关键构件中得到了实际应用,逐步实现了从“科研为主”到“生产制造为核心”的转型,并展现出广阔的应用前景。据统计,2013—2019年我国3D打印领域一直维持40%的增长速度,产业规模逐渐扩大,自主研发能力不断提升,SLM等工艺可达国际水平。随着行业标准的逐步建立起来,SLM设备基本实现了国产化。未来,铝合金在SLM领域的相关研究有如下几个方面需要重点关注:

1) 目前SLM铝合金材料仍然受限,基体材料主要集中于AlSi10Mg、Al-Cu-Mg、Al7075和Al6061,且对航空航天领域需求量较大的高强耐热铝合金、铝基复合材料的研究相对较少,十分有必要拓展出航空航天领域不同结构件需求的铝合金及其复合材料。

2) 各类型铝合金及其复合材料的3D打印参数应进一步优化,如SLM工艺中的扫描策略、激光参数、扫描速度、扫描间距等。打印参数在很大程度上影响了成形件内部的孔洞、裂纹等缺陷,采用优化的打印参数才可打印出致密性更好乃至全致密的零部件。

3) 进一步研究适用于SLM铝合金及其复合材料的最佳后期热处理方法。SLM构件与传统的铸造零件的成形过程不同,获得的晶粒尺寸、晶界结构、微区元素分布等微观组织也明显不同,对应的最佳热处理方式也必然有所不同,因此研究出具有针对性的热处理方法很有必要。

4) 成形件的表面质量限制了其使用范围,因此需要合适的表面处理工艺。应依据构件内部的复杂结构以及外表面的精度要求,针对性地采用表面后处理工艺(如激光重熔、激光抛光、化学抛光、电解抛光、喷砂等)对成形构件进行处理,形成适宜的表面处理工艺制度。

5) SLM技术虽然具有独特的自身优势,但还属于非主流技术,其中的主要原因是成形尺寸受限,难以满足大多数工业级零件的尺寸要求。未来,大尺寸、多光束、智能数字化、复杂结构化、个性定制化将是SLM设备的发展趋势。

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Development of Selective Laser Melted Aluminum Alloys and Aluminum Matrix Composites in Aerospace Field

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Abstract

Significance Aluminum alloys and aluminum matrix composites have been widely used in aerospace components such as fuselage skin materials, engines, fuel tanks, panels, brackets, and metal mirrors owing to their excellent physical and chemical properties such as good thermal conductivity, electrical conductivity, ductility, plasticity, corrosion resistance, and low density.

Traditional methods for fabricating aluminum components, such as casting and extrusion, require the use of tools or dies to produce the parts. However, aluminum alloys used in such processes suffer from low as-cast strength

and require long production cycles. Furthermore, forming complex structures using these materials is difficult and the wastage of materials is high. Such limitations prevent aluminum alloys from meeting the requirements of high efficiency and fast manufacturing technology in aerospace industry and the flexibility to produce complex precise structures. Driven by this urgent demand, innovative developments have been made in the additive manufacturing (AM) processing of aluminum alloys and their composites.

Selective laser melting (SLM), a type of laser three-dimensional (3D) printing, is a layer-based AM technology used for manufacturing complex and customized structures from metal powders. The main advantages of this process over conventional manufacturing methods include highly flexible design, simple machining process, structural integration, high material utilization, and high mechanical properties of produced samples. SLM can be used to produce intricate parts that conventionally require a series of manufacturing processes. Moreover, this process can be cost-effective by reducing the costs of raw materials and time-effective by reducing the time required for design and manufacturing.

Although commercial applications of AM have increased rapidly, few materials have been deemed suitable for SLM so far. Aluminum alloys show good weldability; however, such materials are typically difficult to process in the field of laser 3D printing compared with titanium and nickel alloys. Thus, they have limited processing applicability. Moreover, their inherent high laser reflectivity, high thermal conductivity, easy oxidation, and low density cause problems in the formation process such as high liquid viscosity, balling defect, and poor powder fluidity. Moreover, fabricating aluminum matrix composites using SLM is even more difficult owing to the additional particles used in the process.

Recently, improvements in the technology and application of high-power fiber laser equipment as well as increasing research on aluminum alloys have led to numerous achievements in SLM aluminum alloys. However, because limited varieties of aluminum alloys and their composites, most SLM techniques are focused on Al-Si systems. Accordingly, most research must be conducted in this field to promote the wide application of SLM based on aluminum alloys and their composites.

Progress Herein, improvements in the performance of SLM aluminum alloys and their application in the aerospace field were summarized. First, methods for improving the mechanical properties of the alloys by optimizing the SLM parameters were introduced and the best parameter range was determined using single tracks and molten pool morphology (Figs. 6 and 7). Among the processing parameters, the effects of laser scan speed and power have been widely studied. Then, the post-treatments of heating and surface remelting of SLM aluminum alloy parts were detailed. The post-treatment processes were found to considerably improve the elongation of the sample (Fig. 8). In addition, the results of previous research on the properties of AM aluminum alloys and their composites with particles were summarized in detail (Table 2). In particular, some researchers have determined that the mechanical properties of aluminum alloys can be effectively improved by adding reinforcing particles (Figs. 9 and 10). Finally, research progress in the field of aerospace in terms of SLM aluminum components, such as metal mirrors, antenna brackets, and aircraft engines, was discussed (Figs. 11–15).

Conclusions and Prospects Rapid developments have been made recently in SLM technology. In particular, the SLM technology based on aluminum alloys has entered the practical stage, with the application of key components in the field of aerospace manufacturing. In addition, SLM based on these alloys and their composites is expected to transform from scientific research into production and manufacturing, showing broad application prospects. In the future, the SLM based on aluminum alloys and their composites in the aerospace field will continue to develop in the following directions. (1) The mechanical properties of SLM aluminum components can be improved through the reasonable optimization of preprocessing parameters, postprocessing, and surface treatment, as well as by adding reinforcements. (2) The use of these alloys and their composites in SLM can be further developed for various aerospace structural parts. (3) Further developments should be made in terms of SLM equipment with large sizes, multiple beams, intelligent digitalization, complex structure, and customization based on aluminum alloys.

Key words laser technique; laser 3D printing; laser selective melting; additive manufacturing; aluminum alloy; aerospace

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