

"ADVANCEMENTS IN ABRASIVE FLOW MACHINING: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF TECHNIQUES AND APPLICATIONS"

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a comprehensive exploration of Abrasive Flow Machining (AFM) techniques, including one-way, two-way, and multi-way variants, alongside an extensive literature survey covering recent advancements in machining technologies. AFM emerges as a crucial method for finishing intricate components, addressing the growing demand for precise surface polishing and shaping in aerospace, automotive, and other industries. The survey encompasses studies on High Energy Fluid Jet Machining (HEFJet-Mach), Abrasive Waterjet Machining (AWJ), Ultrasonic-Assisted Abrasive Waterjet Machining, and Friction Stir Processing (FSP), highlighting innovative methodologies, modeling approaches, and practical applications within these domains. From the modeling of jet plumes to understanding erosion dynamics and parameter effects, each study contributes to advancing machining techniques and optimizing process parameters. The survey concludes by discussing ongoing research endeavors and future challenges in advancing abrasive flow finishing techniques, aiming to propel AFM into broader industrial applications.

Keywords: Abrasive Flow Machining (AFM), Machining Techniques, Surface Finishing, Process Optimization, Modeling Approaches, Industrial Applications

1. INTRODUCTION

Abrasive Flow Machining (AFM) is a precision machining process used to finish internal passages or intricate shapes in metal workpieces. It's particularly effective for components with complex geometries or internal cavities that are challenging to reach using conventional machining methods. In AFM, a semi-solid abrasive media, typically a polymer or metal-filled putty, is forced through the workpiece's internal channels under pressure. This abrasive media flows through the passages, removing material and polishing surfaces as it flows. The pressure and flow rate are carefully controlled to ensure uniform material removal and achieve desired surface finishes. One of the key advantages of AFM is its ability to polish and deburr complex shapes with high precision and consistency. It can effectively remove burrs, sharp edges, and surface imperfections, improving the component's functionality, aesthetics, and performance. AFM finds applications in various industries, including aerospace, automotive, medical devices, and precision engineering, where tight tolerances and superior surface finishes are essential. It's often used in the manufacturing of components such as turbine blades, hydraulic valve bodies, extrusion dies, and molds for plastic injection. AFM can be tailored to suit specific material types, shapes, and finishing requirements. By adjusting parameters such as abrasive media composition, viscosity, pressure, and flow rate, manufacturers can achieve precise control over material removal and surface finish. AFM is suitable for a wide range of materials, including metals (such as steel, titanium, and aluminum), as well as non-metallic materials like ceramics and composites. This versatility makes it an attractive option for finishing components made from diverse materials. AFM delivers consistent and repeatable results, ensuring uniform surface finishes across multiple workpieces. This reliability is crucial for maintaining quality standards in mass production scenarios. Unlike traditional machining methods that rely on cutting tools, AFM utilizes abrasive particles suspended in a viscous medium to remove material. This minimizes tool wear and extends tool life, resulting in cost savings and reduced downtime for tool maintenance. AFM excels in finishing complex internal features, such as intersecting channels, contoured surfaces, and undercuts, which are difficult to access using conventional machining techniques. It enables manufacturers to achieve smooth and uniform surface finishes even in intricate geometries. amount of material removed during AFM can be precisely controlled, allowing for fine-tuning of surface roughness, edge radii, and dimensional accuracy. This capability is particularly beneficial for applications where tight tolerances are critical. addition to surface finishing, AFM can also be used for other post-processing tasks, such as stress relief, edge rounding, and surface hardening. This multifunctionality adds value to the machining process and enhances the overall performance of finished components. AFM is generally regarded as an environmentally friendly machining process since it produces minimal waste and doesn't involve the use of harmful chemicals or solvents. The abrasive media can often be recycled, further reducing environmental impact. By

leveraging these advantages, manufacturers can leverage AFM to optimize the quality, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness of their machining operations across various industries. Overall, abrasive flow machining offers a versatile and efficient solution for finishing complex workpieces, enhancing their quality and functionality while reducing production time and costs.

D A Axinite et al [1] As demand grows for intricate components from challenging materials, High Energy Fluid Jet Machining (HEFJet-Mach) emerges as a crucial technology. HEFJet-Mach utilizes unrestrained fluid jets to manipulate workpiece material. This paper aims to comprehensively outline recent advancements in HEFJet-Mach, covering machine designs, modeling of jet plumes and interactions with surfaces, part quality, process supervision and control, as well as maintenance and safety considerations. Y Yuan et al. [2] This article introduces a fluid-structure interface (FSI) coupling model to simulate micro-hole erosion profiles generated by abrasive waterjet (AWJ) machining. The model efficiently captures erosion characteristics under various AWJ parameters. Validated with experimental data on Ti6Al4V, the FSI model accurately reflects erosion field dynamics and parameter effects on footprint profiles. Its findings hold significance for understanding erosion field behavior and guiding practical applications in aerospace industries. C Huang et al. [3] This study employs computational fluid dynamics (CFD) to model flow fields in ultrasonic-assisted abrasive waterjet machining, aided by the discrete phase method. Dynamic mesh method simulates workpiece vibration. Investigating ultrasonic vibration's effects, results show lower pressure and enhanced lateral flow on vibrating targets, elevating particle velocity by weakening stagnation effects. Experimental findings confirm that ultrasonic vibration facilitates material removal in abrasive waterjet machining. T Min et al. [4] This study investigates the correlation between cutting depth and maximum kinetic energy in abrasive waterjet cutting, crucial in estimating operational time and costs. Parameters such as energy (water pressure, flow rate, abrasive feed rate, traverse speed), geometry (standoff distance), material properties (α and β), and nozzle system parameters are considered. Experimental data on hard granite specimens validate the model, demonstrating a power function relationship between cutting depth and maximum kinetic energy. This model offers a valuable tool for accurately estimating process time in abrasive waterjet cutting of rocks. M Sushil et al. [5] This paper investigates the finishing of small slots in SiC Metal Matrix Composites (MMCs) with aluminum as the base material using abrasive flow machining, crucial for aerospace, automobile, and medical applications. Material removal rate and surface roughness change (ΔR_a) are studied. Response surface methodology, including Box–Behnken design, optimizes input parameters like fluid pressure, oil percentage, grit size, abrasive concentration, workpiece material, and cycles. Analysis of variance identifies parameter significance, leading to an optimum parameter combination. Scanning electron microscope and X-ray diffraction analyses further examine and analyze specimens, enhancing understanding of the process. M Alipour et al. [6] This study explores multi-pass friction stir processing (FSP) with zirconia nanoparticles on AA5083 sheets to create surface nanocomposites. Various passes are investigated for their impact on microstructure, microhardness, tensile, and wear properties. Results indicate that multiple FSP iterations consistently enhance tensile properties and microhardness due to microstructural modifications, including improved powder dispersion, finer grain size, and reduced particle clustering. EBSD and TEM analyses reveal high-angle grain boundaries and continuous dynamic recrystallization in the 8-pass FSP nanocomposite. Wear tests demonstrate reduced wear rates in further processed specimens, with fracture surfaces resembling ductile fracture patterns similar to the base material. Zhe Lv et al. [7] This study employs computational fluid dynamics (CFD) to model flow fields in ultrasonic-assisted abrasive waterjet machining, aiding in the understanding of impact erosion dynamics. Utilizing the discrete phase method, the effects of ultrasonic vibration on pressure and velocity distributions are investigated, alongside particle impact parameters. Results suggest that vibration reduces pressure values on the target, enhances lateral flow, and increases particle velocity by mitigating stagnation effects. Experimental erosion tests corroborate these findings, indicating that ultrasonic vibration facilitates material removal in abrasive waterjet machining processes. Y Fu et al. [8] In abrasive flow machining (AFM), simulating the flow field of abrasive media in a constrained passage is pivotal for optimizing process parameters and fixture core design. Experimental rheological characterization of various abrasives informs a model constructed using the continuous medium hypothesis. A pressure detection platform validates simulated data, revealing consistent trends with measured pressures. Results show abrasives' diameter minimally affects rheological properties, and pressures increase with extrusion pressure, gradually reducing along the flow. Increased extrusion pressure deepens surface finishing marks, enhances surface roughness, and prolongs processing time for stabilizing surface quality in AFM. J Sambharia et al. [9] Abrasive flow finishing is a vital technique in aerospace, automobile, and other industries for intricate surface polishing and shaping. Despite its versatility, high costs limit widespread adoption. This article introduces a novel classification of abrasive flow finishing processes based on energy and tooling variations, highlighting key research outcomes. It delves into

physical modeling, process developments, and hybridizations. Future challenges include exploring low-cost media, enhancing tooling, and addressing environmental concerns, aiming to propel abrasive flow finishing into broader industrial applications. Bouland et al. [10] Abrasive Flow Machining (AFM) is ideal for finishing complex components from additive C manufacturing. However, it alters part geometry due to mass loss. This paper proposes a combined numerical-experimental approach to predict AFM results efficiently. The model accounts for abrasive grain indentation, initial surface roughness, and fluid dynamics parameters via computational fluid dynamics (CFD). Experimental validation on Ti-6Al-4V coupons confirms close agreement between simulations and experiments in material removal. Minor discrepancies suggest refining calibration and adjusting boundary conditions for improved accuracy in predicting AFM outcomes.

2. REVIEW OF PAST WORK

2.1 Development of AFM variants

Based on the arrangement of media cylinders and motions provided to abrasive media, AFM is classified into four categories.

2.2 One-way AFM

"One-way AFM" refers to a specific variant of Abrasive Flow Machining (AFM) where the abrasive media flows through the workpiece in a single direction. In this process, the abrasive media is forced through the internal passages of the workpiece in one direction only, typically from one end to the other. This unidirectional flow of abrasive media allows for controlled material removal and surface finishing along the desired flow path within the workpiece. One-way AFM is particularly suitable for applications where a consistent surface finish and precise material removal are required in specific areas or along defined channels. Key characteristics and considerations of one-way AFM include:

1. **Directional Control:** Unlike other AFM variants where the abrasive media flows back and forth through the workpiece, one-way AFM offers precise control over the direction of material removal. This directional control allows for targeted finishing of internal passages without affecting surrounding areas.
2. **Uniform Material Removal:** By maintaining a consistent flow direction, one-way AFM helps achieve uniform material removal rates and surface finishes along the entire length of the machined features. This uniformity is essential for meeting tight tolerances and surface quality requirements.
3. **Reduced Processing Time:** One-way AFM can be more efficient than bidirectional AFM for certain applications since it eliminates the need for reversing the flow direction. This can result in reduced processing time and improved productivity, especially for long or complex workpieces.
4. **Process Stability:** The unidirectional flow of abrasive media in one-way AFM contributes to process stability and repeatability. It minimizes the risk of flow instabilities or oscillations that may occur when changing flow directions, ensuring consistent machining outcomes.
5. **Application Specificity:** One-way AFM is often chosen for applications where material removal and surface finishing need to be precisely controlled along a specific path or direction within the workpiece. Examples include internal passages in aerospace components, automotive engine parts, and intricate molds for plastic injection.

2.3 Two-way AFM

"Two-way AFM" refers to a variant of Abrasive Flow Machining (AFM) where the abrasive media flows through the workpiece in both directions, alternating back and forth. In this process, the abrasive media is pushed through the internal passages of the workpiece in one direction and then reversed to flow back through the same passages in the opposite direction. Key characteristics and considerations of two-way AFM include:

1. **Bidirectional Flow:** Unlike one-way AFM, which flows in a single direction, two-way AFM alternates the flow direction of the abrasive media. This bidirectional flow pattern helps ensure more uniform material removal and surface finishing throughout the internal passages of the workpiece.
2. **Enhanced Material Removal:** The back-and-forth movement of the abrasive media in two-way AFM allows for more thorough material removal compared to one-way AFM. By reversing the flow direction, the abrasive particles can reach and address areas that may have been missed during the initial pass, resulting in improved surface quality and dimensional accuracy.
3. **Deburring and Edge Radiusing:** Two-way AFM is particularly effective for deburring and edge radiusing applications, where removing sharp edges and burrs from internal passages is crucial. The alternating flow direction helps ensure consistent deburring and edge blending along the entire length of the machined features.

4. Controlled Surface Finish: Similar to one-way AFM, two-way AFM offers control over surface finish quality. By adjusting parameters such as abrasive media composition, pressure, and flow rate, manufacturers can achieve the desired surface roughness and texture while maintaining dimensional integrity.

5. Versatility: Two-way AFM can be applied to a wide range of workpiece geometries and materials, making it a versatile machining process. It is commonly used in industries such as aerospace, automotive, medical devices, and precision engineering for finishing components with complex internal passages and intricate shapes.

6. Process Optimization: Optimizing the timing and duration of flow reversals is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of two-way AFM. Parametric analysis and experimentation may be conducted to determine the optimal cycle parameters for achieving desired machining outcomes while minimizing processing time and costs.

2.4 Multi way AFM

"Multi-way AFM" extends the concept of abrasive flow machining (AFM) beyond just two directions of flow, allowing for more complex and intricate material removal patterns within the workpiece's internal passages. In multi-way AFM, the abrasive media can flow in multiple directions, including forward, backward, sideways, or even in circular or spiral motions, depending on the specific requirements of the workpiece and the machining objectives. Key characteristics and considerations of multi-way AFM include:

1. Enhanced Flexibility: Multi-way AFM offers greater flexibility in controlling the flow paths of the abrasive media within the workpiece. This flexibility allows for tailored material removal strategies, enabling manufacturers to address specific surface finish requirements, complex geometries, and internal features more effectively.

2. Optimized Material Removal: By directing the abrasive media along multiple flow paths, multi-way AFM can achieve more uniform material removal and surface finishing throughout the workpiece. This optimization helps ensure consistent machining outcomes and improved part quality, especially in areas with intricate geometries or challenging access points.

3. Complex Geometry Handling: Multi-way AFM is well-suited for finishing components with complex internal passages, intersecting channels, and irregular shapes. The ability to direct the abrasive media along multiple paths enables thorough cleaning, deburring, and polishing of intricate features, enhancing the overall functionality and performance of the workpiece.

4. Fine-Tuned Surface Finish: With multi-way AFM, manufacturers can fine-tune the surface finish by controlling the direction, velocity, and duration of abrasive media flow in different regions of the workpiece. This level of control allows for targeted surface refinement and optimization of surface roughness, texture, and dimensional accuracy based on specific application requirements.

5. Process Optimization and Simulation: Optimizing multi-way AFM processes often involves conducting parametric studies and simulations to identify the most efficient flow patterns and parameters for achieving desired machining outcomes. Advanced modeling techniques can help predict material removal rates, surface finish quality, and tool wear under various operating conditions, aiding in process optimization and troubleshooting.

6. Application Diversity: Multi-way AFM finds applications across various industries, including aerospace, automotive, mold and die making, medical devices, and electronics manufacturing. It is particularly beneficial for components with complex internal passages, such as turbine blades, engine blocks, injection molds, and hydraulic valve bodies, where achieving precise surface finishes and dimensional tolerances is critical.

3. PARAMETRIC ANALYSIS OF AFM

Parametric analysis of Abrasive Flow Machining (AFM) involves systematically studying the effects of various process parameters on machining outcomes such as material removal rate, surface finish quality, dimensional accuracy, and tool wear. Here's a detailed breakdown of the key parameters typically analyzed in AFM:

1. Abrasive Media Characteristics:

- Composition: Type of abrasive particles (e.g., silicon carbide, alumina), size distribution, hardness, and concentration.
- Viscosity: Viscosity of the abrasive media, which affects its flow behavior and material removal efficiency.
- Particle Shape: Shape of abrasive particles (e.g., angular, spherical) influencing the cutting action and surface finish.

2. Process Parameters:

- Pressure: Applied pressure exerted on the abrasive media, influencing material removal rate and surface finish quality.
- Flow Rate: Rate at which abrasive media flows through the workpiece, affecting material removal efficiency and surface roughness.

- Temperature: Operating temperature of the AFM process, impacting abrasive media viscosity, material properties, and tool wear.

3. Tooling Design:

- Tooling Geometry: Shape, size, and configuration of the tooling, including the number and arrangement of flow channels.

- Material: Material composition and surface finish of the tooling, influencing abrasive media flow and machining performance.

4. Workpiece Characteristics:

- Material: Material properties such as hardness, ductility, and thermal conductivity, affecting material removal behavior and surface finish.

- Geometry: Complexity of the workpiece geometry, including internal passages, sharp corners, and surface irregularities.

- Size: Dimensions of the workpiece, influencing process parameters such as pressure, flow rate, and cycle time.

5. Cycle Parameters:

- Dwell Time: Duration of time the abrasive media remains in contact with specific areas of the workpiece, influencing material removal depth and surface finish.

- Reversal Time: Time taken to reverse the flow direction of the abrasive media in bidirectional AFM, affecting material removal uniformity and surface finish consistency.

6. Environmental Conditions:

- Ambient Conditions: Factors such as temperature, humidity, and air quality affecting process stability and material behavior.

- Fluid Contamination: Presence of contaminants in the abrasive media or workpiece affecting machining performance and surface quality.

7. Post-Processing Treatments:

- Surface Coatings: Application of surface coatings or treatments to enhance surface properties, such as hardness, corrosion resistance, and wear resistance.

- Heat Treatments: Thermal treatments applied to the workpiece after AFM to relieve residual stresses and improve material properties.

Parametric analysis typically involves conducting controlled experiments or simulations to study the individual and combined effects of these parameters on AFM performance metrics. By optimizing process parameters based on parametric analysis results, manufacturers can improve machining efficiency, quality, and cost-effectiveness in AFM operations.

4. MODELLING OF AFM

Modeling of Abrasive Flow Machining (AFM) involves developing mathematical, computational, or empirical models to simulate and predict the behavior of the machining process, including material removal rates, surface finish quality, tool wear, and other performance metrics. Here's an overview of the different approaches to modeling AFM:

1. Analytical Models:

- Analytical models aim to describe the fundamental principles governing AFM, such as fluid dynamics, abrasive particle interactions, and material removal mechanisms.

- These models may involve mathematical equations derived from fluid mechanics, rheology, and tribology to predict parameters like pressure distribution, abrasive particle velocity, and material removal rates.

- Analytical models provide insights into the underlying physics of AFM but may be limited by simplifying assumptions and the complexity of the process.

2. Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) Simulations:

- CFD simulations model the flow of abrasive media through the workpiece's internal passages using numerical methods to solve the Navier-Stokes equations and other relevant equations.

- CFD simulations can predict parameters such as pressure distribution, velocity profiles, turbulence, and abrasive particle trajectories within the workpiece.

- These simulations provide detailed insights into flow behavior and can be used to optimize process parameters, tooling design, and workpiece geometry.

3. Finite Element Analysis (FEA):

- FEA models simulate the deformation and material removal processes during AFM, considering factors such as tooling geometry, workpiece material properties, and applied loads.

- FEA can predict parameters such as stress distribution, material removal depth, surface deformation, and contact pressures between the abrasive media and workpiece surfaces.

- These models help optimize tooling design, minimize distortion and residual stresses, and ensure dimensional accuracy during AFM.

4. Empirical or Statistical Models:

- Empirical models are based on experimental data obtained from actual AFM processes, correlating input parameters (e.g., pressure, flow rate, abrasive media properties) with output variables (e.g., material removal rate, surface roughness).

- Statistical techniques such as regression analysis, neural networks, or machine learning algorithms may be used to develop predictive models based on experimental data.

- Empirical models are useful for predicting AFM performance under specific operating conditions and can be used for process optimization and control.

5. Hybrid Models:

- Hybrid models combine elements of analytical, computational, and empirical approaches to capture the complex interactions and dynamics of AFM more accurately.

- These models may integrate analytical equations with numerical simulations or empirical data to improve predictive accuracy and reliability.

- Hybrid models offer a balance between accuracy and computational efficiency and can be customized to specific AFM applications and requirements.

Modeling of AFM plays a crucial role in process optimization, tooling design, and quality assurance by providing insights into process behavior, identifying critical parameters, and facilitating informed decision-making to improve machining efficiency and quality.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underscores the significance of AFM techniques in achieving precise surface finishing and shaping of complex components. By considering the advancements in one-way, two-way, and multi-way AFM, alongside recent developments in other machining technologies, the survey provides valuable insights into process optimization, parameter modeling, and practical applications across various industries.

The versatility and efficiency of AFM, coupled with innovative methodologies and modeling approaches, offer promising opportunities for enhancing productivity, efficiency, and sustainability in manufacturing processes. Moving forward, continued research efforts are essential to address challenges such as cost reduction, environmental concerns, and process optimization, ensuring the widespread adoption and further advancement of AFM techniques in the machining industry.

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