

Features of Engineering Methods of Research Results on Butt Welding on Metal Pipelines

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Abstract. This article discusses the use of flash butt welding (FBW) for increased labor productivity in pipeline construction. However, despite its promise, FBW technologies and equipment have limitations in creating defect-free welded joints. The Ishikawa diagram is used to systematize and analyze factors that cause defects, which are then ranked on a Pareto diagram. The main causes of defects are found to be associated with human factors, such as the qualifications of workers, as well as imperfections in machinery and equipment, material deviations, and technology and measurement limitations. A correlation matrix is used to analyze the causes of the decrease in quality and determine that improving methods and means of FBW processes, along with FBW technologies, is the solution. However, a complete computer model of FBW processes has not yet been created due to difficulties in describing energy release and other energy phenomena. A physical and mathematical model is necessary to take into account energy processes in the welding zone.

Keywords: Defects in welded joints, Ishikawa diagram, Pareto diagram, human factor, qualification of performers

Introduction

For a significant increase in labor productivity in the construction of pipelines, it is very promising to use flash butt welding of FBW [1]. Unfortunately, modern FBW technologies and the equipment used do not allow to fully create defect-free welded joints [2, 3]. Analysis of the causes of defects is difficult to implement due to their diversity [4]. One of the effective tools for systematization and analysis of significant factors that cause any consequence is the Ishikawa diagram [5].

Traditionally, all possible causes on the Ishikawa diagram [8] are categorized according to the principles: (human) - due to the human factor; (machines, equipment) - associated with equipment; (materials) - related to materials; (methods, technology) - related to the technology of work, with the organization of processes; (measurement, control) - related to methods of measurement and quality control. Subsequently, these reasons were ranked on the Pareto diagram [6]. On Figure 1 shows the Ishikawa diagram indicating the main cause-and-effect relationships for ensuring the quality of welded joints during the implementation of the FBW process.

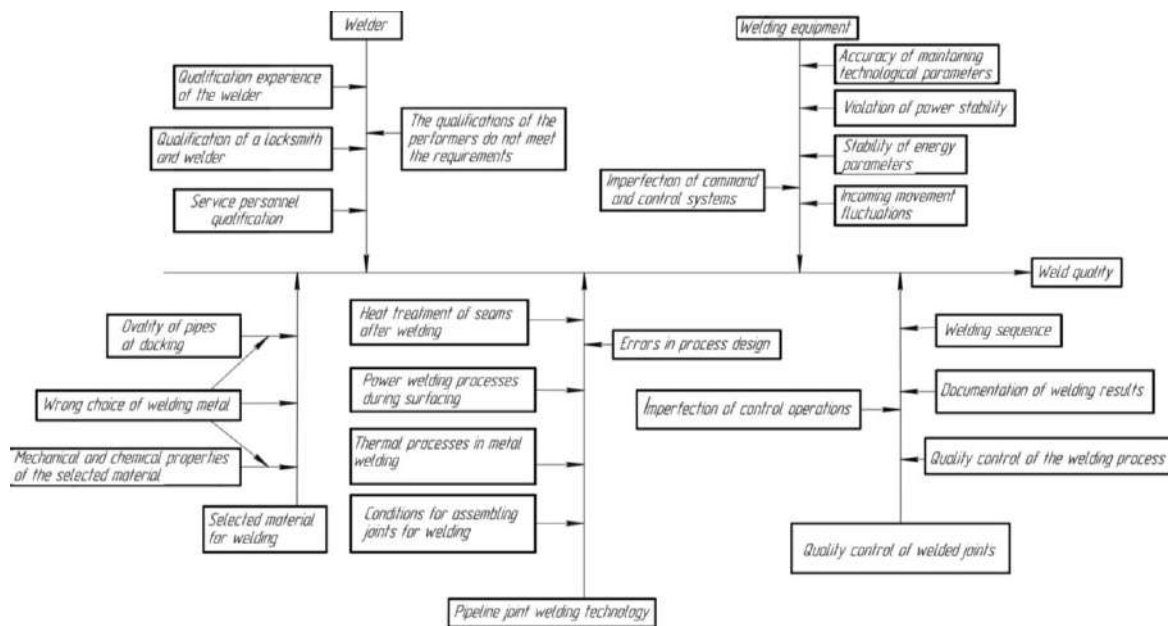


Fig. 1. - Ishikawa diagram of the implementation of the FBW process, indicating the cause-and-effect relationships

It has been established that the common cause of defects in the implementation of FBW processes associated with the human factor (human) is the qualification of the performers that does not correspond to the complexity of the process. The Pareto diagram showed that the absence of process monitoring systems and the possibility of

adjusting modes, assembly and installation problems of the welding machine at the joint, as well as machine failures and vague wording in the RE also contribute to the occurrence of defects.

The main reasons for the occurrence of defects due to imperfections (machines, equipment) are the instability of the welding mode parameters, the energy parameters of the process, the supply current, as well as the design flaws of the equipment. The Pareto diagram showed that the main among them are the instability of the technological parameters of the welding mode and the instability of the upsetting mechanisms. Among the reasons for the decline in product quality associated with (materials) are deviations in the ovality of pipes and their initial mechanical properties, the presence of internal and surface defects and contamination of the pipe cavity. The Pareto diagram showed the primary influence on the occurrence of defects of the ovality of pipes and their initial mechanical properties, the presence of internal defects.

There are still a number of problems grouped into the category (methods, technology), including the lack of the possibility of intervening in the welding process, difficulties in flashing and upsetting, the need for maintenance to improve the mechanical properties of the welds and the HAZ. The Pareto diagram shows that the main ones are the impossibility of prompt intervention in the welding process. In many respects, determine the quality of FBW.

1. Methodology

The Pareto diagram shows that the main disadvantages associated with methods for measuring and controlling the quality of welded joints are the inability to predict the quality of welds directly in the welding process and the lack of a system for monitoring deviations in the assembly of joints.

For further in-depth analysis, a correlation matrix was built between the causes of a decrease in the quality of welded joints and the conditions for performing welding work, which made it possible to determine that the integral way to solve most of these problems is to improve the methods and means of all stages of the FBW process with simultaneous improvement of FBW technologies based on high-quality and quantitative analysis of phenomena occurring during welding. It is known that the necessary properties of welded joints are ensured by setting the optimal parameters of the welding mode using computer analysis methods [7]. However, a sufficiently complete computer model of the processes occurring in the contact zone has not yet been created. This is due to the problems of describing the heat release in the contact zones, the formation of a permanent connection in the liquid-solid phase, and structural transformations in the weld and HAZ.

Since heat release is a system-forming factor, exclusive attention is paid to it [8]. Powerful heat release in the joint is due to the flow of current through numerous bridges of liquid metal in the joint, which randomly appear and explode, which leads to the removal of a significant amount of metal in the form of spatter. Therefore, the main problem of computer simulation of the FBW process is to take into account the basic energy phenomena in the physical and mathematical description. The main technological factors are the reflow rate V , allowances for reflow δ and upsetting Δ , at the installation reach L (distance from the machine clamps to the joint), as well as the open-circuit voltage U (Figure 2).

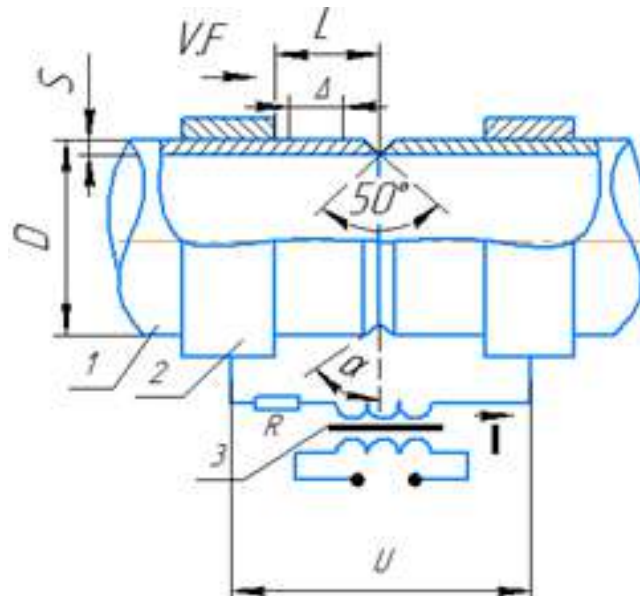


Fig. 2. - Scheme of the flash welding process. 1 - weldable structure, 2 - clamps, 3 - welding transformer

In this regard, the physical and mathematical model should take into account the energy processes occurring in the zone immediately adjacent to the joint (Figure 3).

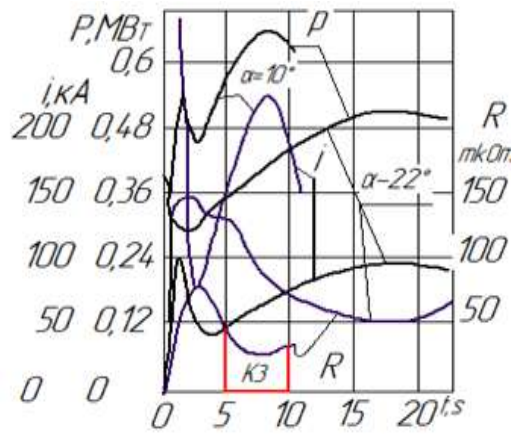


Fig. 5. - Influence of the bevel angle on the power, current and electrical resistance of the joint in the initial phase of the process at a melting speed of 0.14 mm/s

On Figure 5 shows the change in heat dissipation power and joint resistance in the initial phase of the process at different values of the angle of cutting edges. The power consumed for melting is determined by the amount of heat carried away by the drops metal and heat flow into the metal of the joint. At the beginning of reflow, the power of the thermal flow into metal which has a low temperature. As the metal warms up, this power decreases, and the total power of the process and the welding current decrease accordingly. The power carried away by the drops increases as the growth of the reflow area faster than the decrease in the heat flux in edges.

Therefore, after the initial decrease in current, its increase begins. Maximum current and power is reached when the fusion has removed the grooves and covered the entire cross section.

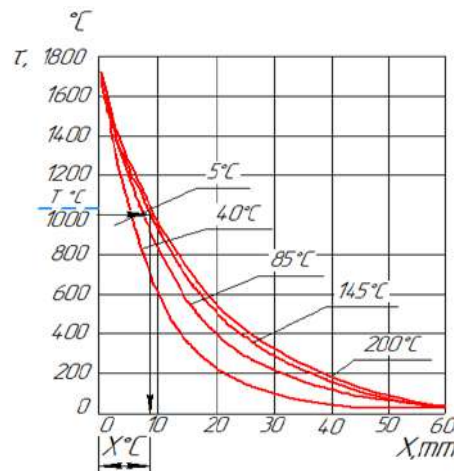


Fig. 6. - Temperature distribution over the depth of the metal at different times of melting and determination of the allowance for upsetting X_{oc} by the temperature T_{oc} of metal deformation during joint upsetting

Stage 3 is characterized by a steady temperature distribution in the joint. Since at this stage the melting covers the entire cross section of the joint, the power of the heat flux into the metal gradually decreases, and the temperature distribution stabilizes. In this case, the optimal combination of the edge approach rate and the energy parameters of the process should ensure a uniform temperature distribution without chaotic arc breaks and short circuits. If at this stage the heat input is excessively high, and the edge convergence rate is too low, then there is a high probability of occurrence of local tearing of the metal, which increases the risk of defects in the formation of the seam.

On Figure 6 shows the change in the temperature distribution over the depth of the metal during melting. The resulting temperature distribution makes it possible to determine the optimal value of the melting allowance. This allowance is determined by the optimum temperature for completing the deformation of the metal during upsetting. When welding steels, this temperature is 1000 ... 1200 ° C. It is also desirable that the precipitation temperature be below the phase transition temperature (760 0 C), which excludes the formation of hardening structures. According to the value of the deformation temperature during upsetting T_{oc} and the resulting temperature distribution, it is possible to determine the allowance for reflow X_{os} , fig. 6. According to the tensile strength σ_{os} at the selected temperature T_{os} , Figure 7, and the cross-sectional area of the joint - upsetting force.

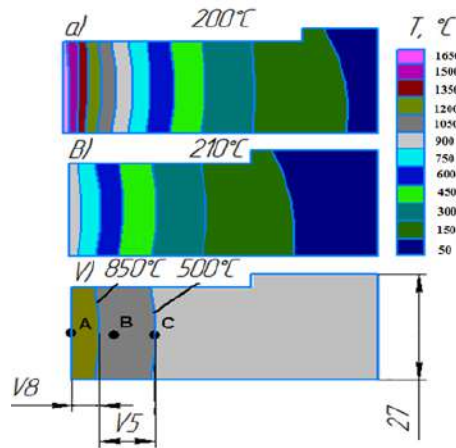


Fig. 7. - Temperature distribution in the wall of a steel pipe at the moment end of melting (a), at the moment of end of upsetting (b) and location of zones of complete (X8, $T > 850$ °C) and partial (X5, 850 °C $> T > 500$ °C) structural transformation (c)

To ensure the fusion of the joint at stage 4, flashing is forced before upsetting. To do this, the speed is increased to the maximum allowable value of the power of the machine. On Figure 8 shows the influence of the value V_{x4} of the flashing speed at the stage of its forcing on the power P of heat release in the joint, on the welding current I and on the resistance of the joint R . at a speed of 0.4 mm/s, the resistance of the joint drops below $50 \mu\Omega$, the internal resistance of the machine.

Therefore, it is more rational to stepwise increase the reflow rate: at the first stage - V_{x3} to the limit value at which the stability of the process is maintained, and at the second stage, the value of V_{x4} to the maximum for the power source with varying the reflow interval. Based on the results obtained, which are in good agreement with the data of [11,12,13,14], a cyclogram with $V_{x4} = 1.2$ mm/s was adopted. At stage 5, joint settlement and cooling occur. Sludge plays an important role in weld quality as it forces molten metal and contaminants out of the joint. The duration of upsetting is determined by the capabilities of the upsetting mechanism of the welding machine and should be as short as possible, since after short circuit the temperature of the metal decreases rapidly (Figure 8).

Conclusions

The performed analysis made it possible to determine how the main physical and technological conditions for the flow of FBW affect the possibility of obtaining defect-free welded joints of joints in large-diameter main pipelines, including the bevel angle of the joint edges, allowance for flashing, forcing flashing and upsetting. The presented research methods can also be used to solve other problems of welding production, for example, the creation of intelligent control systems.

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