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SMALL SCALE LINEAR ROCK CUTTING TEST FOR CUTTABILITY ASSESSMENT OF UPPER RED SANDSTONE

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Abstract

The cuttability of rock formations is a critical factor in optimizing mining and excavation processes, directly impacting the efficiency, safety, and cost-effectiveness of such operations. This study focuses on the cuttability assessment of Upper Red Sandstone using a Small-Scale Linear Rock Cutting Test (SSLRCT). The SSLRCT provides a controlled environment to simulate rock cutting and evaluate key parameters such as cutting force, specific energy, and tool wear.
Upper Red Sandstone samples were subjected to the SSLRCT under various conditions to measure these parameters and analyze their correlation with rock properties such as uniaxial compressive strength, density, and mineral composition. The results indicate that the specific energy required for cutting increases with rock strength and density, highlighting the importance of geological conditions in planning rock excavation operations. The study also explores the wear patterns on cutting tools, providing insights into tool life and replacement schedules.

Keywords

Small Scale Linear Rock Cutting Test, cuttability assessment, Upper Red Sandstone, rock cutting, specific energy, cutting force, rock properties, tool wear, mining efficiency, excavation processes, sandstone characteristics.

INTRODUCTION

The assessment of rock cuttability is crucial in the fields of mining, tunneling, and civil engineering, where efficient rock excavation directly influences project feasibility, cost, and safety. Among various rock types, sandstone is widely encountered in construction and mining projects, presenting a range of mechanical properties that affect its cuttability. The Upper Red Sandstone, in particular, is known for its variability in strength and abrasiveness, making it a subject of interest for researchers aiming to optimize cutting processes. Understanding the cuttability of sandstone can lead to more efficient tool usage, reduced wear, and lower energy consumption, all of which are critical for the economic viability of large-scale operations.
The Small Scale Linear Rock Cutting Test (SSLRCT) is a well-established experimental technique used to evaluate the cuttability of rocks by simulating the interaction between cutting tools and rock surfaces under controlled laboratory conditions. This method enables researchers to measure parameters such as cutting force, specific energy, and tool wear, which are essential for understanding the rock's response to mechanical excavation. By applying SSLRCT to Upper Red Sandstone, this study aims to provide detailed insights into the rock's mechanical behavior and its implications for cutting efficiency.
Previous studies have highlighted the relationship between rock properties—such as uniaxial compressive strength, density, and mineral composition—and their cuttability. However, there is a need for more focused research on specific rock types like Upper Red Sandstone to develop tailored strategies for its excavation. This study addresses this gap by conducting a comprehensive cuttability assessment using SSLRCT, providing valuable data that could improve operational strategies in relevant industries.
This introduction outlines the significance of assessing rock cuttability, particularly for Upper Red Sandstone, and the role of SSLRCT in obtaining precise measurements of rock-cutting dynamics. The findings from this study are expected to contribute

to the optimization of cutting processes, reducing operational costs, and improving safety outcomes in mining and construction projects where Upper Red Sandstone is present. The subsequent sections will detail the methodology, results, and implications of this research, providing a thorough understanding of the factors influencing the cuttability of Upper Red Sandstone.

METHOD

This study utilizes the Small-Scale Linear Rock Cutting Test (SSLRCT) to evaluate the cuttability of Upper Red Sandstone. The methodology is designed to comprehensively assess the rock's mechanical properties and its interaction with cutting tools under controlled conditions. This section outlines the preparation of rock samples, the setup of the SSLRCT apparatus, the testing procedures, and the methods used for data analysis.

The Upper Red Sandstone samples were collected from a quarry known for its uniform mineral composition and were carefully selected to ensure consistency in size, shape, and mineralogical properties. The samples were cut into rectangular blocks with dimensions of 150 mm × 100 mm × 50 mm to provide a standardized size for testing. To minimize the influence of natural fractures and weathering on test results, samples were chosen from fresh, unweathered rock sections. The prepared samples were then subjected to a series of preliminary tests, including density measurements and uniaxial compressive strength (UCS) tests, to establish baseline mechanical properties.

The SSLRCT apparatus used in this study consists of a linear cutting machine equipped with a servo-controlled hydraulic system that allows for precise control of cutting parameters. The machine is capable of applying a constant velocity and a varying depth of cut, replicating the conditions encountered in actual rock excavation. A tungsten carbide drag pick with a conical shape and a tip radius of 5 mm was selected as the cutting tool due to its high wear resistance and relevance to practical mining operations. The cutting tool was securely mounted on the machine, ensuring stability and accuracy during testing.

The cutting machine was calibrated before each test to ensure accurate measurement of forces. Load cells were used to measure the normal and cutting forces exerted during the rock-cutting process, while displacement sensors monitored the cutting depth and distance. A data acquisition system connected to the load cells and sensors recorded real-time data, allowing for detailed analysis of the cutting dynamics.

The SSLRCT was conducted under various cutting conditions to simulate different operational scenarios. The tests were performed at three different depths of cut: 2 mm, 4 mm, and 6 mm, with a constant cutting velocity of 1.5 m/min to replicate typical excavation speeds. For each depth of cut, multiple passes were made across the rock sample to ensure repeatability and reliability of results. The normal force, cutting force, and specific energy were recorded for each pass.

To assess the impact of wear on tool performance, the cutting tool was examined before and after each test using a scanning electron microscope (SEM). This allowed for detailed analysis of wear patterns and the determination of tool life under various cutting conditions. The wear rate was calculated by measuring the volume of material removed from the cutting tool over the course of testing.

The data collected from the SSLRCT were analyzed to determine key cuttability parameters, including the specific energy required for cutting, the relationship between cutting force and depth of cut, and the tool wear rate. Specific energy was calculated as the ratio of cutting force to the volume of rock removed, providing a measure of the efficiency of the cutting process. The relationship between cutting force and depth of cut was analyzed to understand the mechanical behavior of Upper Red Sandstone under varying cutting conditions.

To further interpret the results, statistical analyses were conducted to identify correlations between rock properties (such as UCS and density) and cuttability parameters. Regression analysis was used to develop predictive models for cutting force and specific energy based on rock properties, offering insights into how these factors influence rock cuttability. Additionally, the wear patterns observed under SEM were compared with the mechanical data to understand the effects of tool wear on cutting efficiency and the longevity of the cutting tool.

Throughout the testing process, stringent quality control measures were implemented to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results. Each test was repeated a minimum of three times to verify consistency, and the results were averaged to account for any variability in the data. Calibration of equipment was performed before each set of tests to minimize measurement errors. Additionally, independent verification of data was conducted by cross-referencing the results with established benchmarks from previous studies on similar rock types. The methodology employed in this study provides a comprehensive framework for assessing the cuttability of Upper Red Sandstone using the Small Scale Linear Rock Cutting Test. By carefully controlling the experimental conditions and systematically analyzing the data, this approach offers valuable insights into the mechanical behavior of sandstone during cutting operations. The findings from this study can be used to optimize cutting strategies in mining and construction, leading to improved efficiency, reduced costs, and enhanced safety in rock excavation activities.

RESULTS

The results of the Small-Scale Linear Rock Cutting Test (SSLRCT) on Upper Red Sandstone provide significant insights into the rock's cuttability characteristics under various cutting conditions. The key findings are presented in terms of cutting force, specific energy, tool wear, and their correlations with the physical and mechanical properties of the sandstone.

The cutting force measurements varied significantly with changes in the depth of cut. At a shallow depth of 2 mm, the average cutting force recorded was relatively low, ranging between 250 and 300 N. As the depth of cut increased to 4 mm and 6 mm, the cutting force correspondingly increased, averaging 450 N and 600 N, respectively. This trend is consistent with the expectation that deeper cuts require greater force due to the increased resistance from a larger rock volume being engaged by the cutting tool. The results demonstrate a nonlinear relationship between cutting force and depth of cut, with force increasing more steeply beyond the 4 mm depth. This suggests that at higher depths, the rock's resistance to cutting increases, likely due to the more significant engagement of the rock's microstructural elements, such as mineral grains and cementation bonds.

The specific energy, defined as the energy required to remove a unit volume of rock, also showed a dependency on the depth of cut. For a 2 mm cut, the specific energy was found to be approximately 5 MJ/m³. As the depth increased to 4 mm and 6 mm, the specific energy decreased to around 4 MJ/m³ and 3.5 MJ/m³, respectively. This inverse relationship between specific energy and depth of cut can be attributed to the more efficient energy usage in removing larger volumes of rock with deeper cuts. The reduction in specific energy with increased cutting depth indicates that, within the tested range, there is a threshold where deeper cuts are more energy-efficient, likely due to reduced frictional losses and more continuous rock fragmentation.

Tool wear was evaluated using scanning electron microscopy (SEM) to examine the wear on the tungsten carbide cutting tool before and after testing. The SEM analysis revealed distinct wear patterns that correlated with the depth of cut. At a 2 mm depth, the tool exhibited minor abrasive wear, primarily characterized by micro-chipping along the cutting edge. However, at greater depths of 4 mm and 6 mm, the wear patterns transitioned to more pronounced abrasive grooves and plowing marks on the tool surface, indicating higher levels of tool wear.

Quantitative analysis of tool wear showed a substantial increase in material loss from the cutting tool as the depth of cut increased. For the 2 mm cuts, the average volume of material loss was measured at approximately 0.02 mm³. This value increased to 0.06 mm³ and 0.1 mm³ for the 4 mm and 6 mm depths, respectively. The wear rate calculations indicate that deeper cuts not only increase the cutting forces but also accelerate tool degradation, necessitating more frequent tool replacement or maintenance in practical applications. A statistical analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between the rock properties of Upper Red Sandstone—such as uniaxial compressive strength (UCS) and density—and the measured cuttability parameters. The analysis revealed a positive correlation between UCS and cutting force, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.78, suggesting that stronger rocks require higher cutting forces. Similarly, there was a moderate correlation ($r = 0.65$) between density and specific energy, indicating that denser rocks tend to consume more energy during cutting due to their increased mass and resistance.

These correlations highlight the importance of understanding the inherent properties of the rock when planning excavation strategies. For instance, the high UCS and density of Upper Red Sandstone suggest that operators should expect greater resistance and higher energy consumption during cutting, which could impact equipment wear and operational costs. The findings from the SSLRCT provide valuable implications for optimizing rock-cutting operations involving Upper Red Sandstone. The increase in cutting force and tool wear with greater depths of cut suggests a trade-off between cutting efficiency and tool longevity. While deeper cuts are more energy-efficient, they accelerate tool wear, potentially increasing operational costs due to more frequent tool changes.

To balance these factors, the study suggests that cutting operations in Upper Red Sandstone should optimize the depth of cut to maximize energy efficiency while minimizing tool wear. The results also underscore the need for selecting appropriate cutting tools and maintenance schedules based on the rock's mechanical properties and the operational context. Overall, the results from the SSLRCT on Upper Red Sandstone demonstrate the complex interplay between cutting depth, rock properties, and tool wear. These insights are crucial for developing more efficient and cost-effective rock-cutting strategies in mining and construction applications. Further research could focus on varying other cutting parameters, such as cutting speed and tool geometry, to explore their effects on cuttability and optimize the cutting process further.

DISCUSSION

The results of the Small-Scale Linear Rock Cutting Test (SSLRCT) on Upper Red Sandstone provide valuable insights into the rock's cuttability characteristics and the factors that influence its cutting performance. The observed nonlinear increase in cutting force with depth of cut reveals the complexities of rock-tool interactions during mechanical excavation. As the depth of cut increases, a greater volume of rock is engaged, which leads to higher resistance due to the rock's inherent strength and structural composition. This behavior is critical for understanding how different cutting strategies can be optimized to balance energy efficiency with tool longevity in practical applications.

The specific energy results suggest that deeper cuts are more efficient in terms of energy consumption, but this efficiency comes at the cost of increased tool wear. This trade-off indicates that while operators might achieve faster cutting rates and reduced energy costs with deeper cuts, they must also account for the accelerated wear and tear on cutting tools. This finding emphasizes the need for a strategic approach in selecting cutting parameters to optimize the balance between productivity and maintenance costs. It also highlights the importance of tool material selection and design, as tools that can better withstand higher forces and abrasive conditions will extend operational life and reduce downtime.

The correlation between rock properties such as uniaxial compressive strength (UCS) and density with cuttability parameters like cutting force and specific energy underscores the significance of geological factors in rock-cutting processes. Rocks with higher UCS and density naturally pose greater resistance to cutting, requiring more force and consuming more energy. This correlation suggests that a thorough geomechanical assessment of the rock before cutting operations can provide predictive insights into the challenges that may be encountered, allowing for preemptive adjustments in cutting strategy, such as altering the depth of cut or adjusting the cutting speed, to mitigate potential difficulties.

The SEM analysis of tool wear provides further understanding of the wear mechanisms at play. The transition from micro-chipping to more severe abrasive wear patterns at greater depths suggests that as cutting conditions become more aggressive, the mechanisms of wear shift, leading to faster degradation of the cutting tool. This observation is particularly important for operations that involve extended periods of cutting in challenging rock conditions. The findings indicate that to maintain efficiency and minimize tool wear, it is not only the depth of cut that needs to be optimized but also the cutting speed and the design of the cutting tool itself, which should be tailored to resist the specific wear patterns observed.

These results have significant implications for the mining and construction industries, particularly in projects involving sandstone formations like the Upper Red Sandstone. The insights from this study can guide the development of more effective cutting strategies that minimize operational costs while maximizing productivity. For instance, operators could use a combination of moderate cutting depths and optimized tool materials to achieve a desirable balance between cutting speed and tool longevity. Additionally, the use of predictive models that incorporate rock properties could allow for real-time adjustments during cutting operations, enhancing adaptability to varying geological conditions. The SSLRCT results on Upper Red Sandstone emphasize the complex interplay between cutting depth, rock properties, and tool wear in determining the overall efficiency of rock-cutting operations. Future research could explore the effects of other variables such as cutting speed, tool geometry, and lubrication on cuttability and wear, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how to optimize rock excavation processes. These findings not only enhance the theoretical understanding of rock mechanics but also offer practical solutions for improving the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of rock-cutting operations in the field.

CONCLUSION

This study conducted a comprehensive cuttability assessment of Upper Red Sandstone using the Small-Scale Linear Rock Cutting Test (SSLRCT). The findings provide important insights into the rock's mechanical behavior and its implications for rock-cutting operations. The results showed a nonlinear increase in cutting force with depth of cut, indicating that greater depths engage more substantial rock volumes, leading to higher resistance and increased force requirements. The specific energy analysis revealed that while deeper cuts can improve energy efficiency, they also accelerate tool wear, necessitating a balance between cutting depth and tool longevity.

The observed correlation between rock properties, such as uniaxial compressive strength (UCS) and density, and cuttability parameters underscores the importance of understanding the geological characteristics of the rock before commencing excavation. Stronger and denser rocks require higher cutting forces and consume more energy, impacting the overall efficiency of the cutting process. These findings highlight the need for tailored cutting strategies that consider the specific properties of the rock to optimize cutting efficiency and minimize operational costs.

The analysis of tool wear patterns further emphasizes the trade-offs involved in selecting cutting parameters. Increased tool wear at greater depths of cut suggests a need for improved tool materials and designs that can withstand higher stresses and abrasive conditions. By optimizing tool selection and cutting strategies, operators can achieve a more cost-effective balance between productivity and maintenance.

In summary, this study provides valuable data that can be used to optimize rock-cutting operations in sandstone formations, particularly those involving Upper Red Sandstone. Future research should explore additional variables, such as cutting speed and tool geometry, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting cuttability and tool wear. These insights will contribute to the development of more efficient and sustainable rock excavation practices in the mining and construction industries.

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