Original Article

Hardgrove grindability index and approximate work index of sodium feldspar

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to study the feldspar of Nopphitam District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, Thailand with emphasis on Hardgrove grindability and determination of the approximate work index. Feldspar samples were collected, prepared, and analyzed for their chemical composition. From the analysis of the alkaline metal oxides, all samples were characterized as sodium feldspar. The Hardgrove grindability test used a ball-race test mill. The Hardgrove grindability indices of these feldspar samples had an average of 46.25. Knowing the average Hardgrove index, a calculated work index of 12.88 kW/STPH was estimated using Aplan’s empirical formula. This average work index was less comparable to those of feldspar ores given in the literature. Therefore, the method of Berry and Bruce was used to determine the specific energy and approximate work index. By running a batch dry-grinding test in a rod mill, an average specific energy of 7.34 kW/STPH was determined using Bond’s formula with the reference work index of 11.25 kW/STPH. This specific value is limited to these test conditions: (1) 18x36 cm mill with material hold-up of about 0.08, media loading of about 0.4, and half interstitial filling and (2) each sample must be ground by 8 steel rods with dimensions of 3.5x35 cm each for 15 min. Under these conditions, the approximate work indices of various minerals can be rapidly estimated knowing the 80% passing size (μm) of both feed and product from rod-milling that conforms to the indicated conditions. For example, the approximate work index of Sam Ngao sodium feldspar was 11.03 kW/STPH. This work index was quite comparable to those acquired from various mill manufactures. To obtain more accurate values of sodium feldspar’s work indices, the time-consuming Bond procedure should be performed with a number of corrections for different milling conditions.

Keywords: approximate work index, Hardgrove grindability index, sodium feldspar

1. Introduction

Comminution is an operation whereby mineral particles are size-reduced by crushing and grinding to product sizes required for further processing or end use. About 50% of a mineral processing plant’s operating costs are consumed as energy in size reduction (Herbst, Yi, & Flintoff, 2003). These operations are not only energy intensive, but also energy inefficient. For example, the approximate energy efficiency of a rod mill is only about 7%. Therefore, the grindability of a mineral ore with the appropriate mill is very important. It can be used to measure comminution characteristics and to evaluate grinding efficiency leading to reducing of the processing cost in the mineral industry.

A study of grindability is to evaluate the size and type of mill needed to produce a specified tonnage and power requirement for grinding. The specific energy - mill power over-capacity - is a main parameter for mill sizing. If an
empirical law of comminution is assumed, then the grinding behavior can be expressed as an energy coefficient or work index. Specifically, the Bond work index is suitable for utilization in many industrial grinding processes with particle sizes ranging from 1 mm to 1 μm (Rhodes, 1998).

Bond defined the work index (Wi) as the work (kWh per short ton) used to reduce particles from theoretically infinite size to 80% passing 100 μm. Bond’s formula is derived from an empirical differential equation of grinding energy with the exponent of 1.5 as followed:

$$E_b = 10W_i(1/X_{80,80}^{0.5} - 1/X_{80,80}^{0.5})$$

where $E_b$ is the specific energy (kWh/st or kW/STPH), $X_{80,80}$ is the 80% passing size (μm) of a product, and $X_{1,80}$ is the 80% passing size (μm) of a feed. The 80% passing sizes of both product and feed are normally obtained from the Gaudin-Schuhmann plot. The size distribution in this plot can be expressed as the mass distribution function of a simple power law (Hogg, 2003) as:

$$Q(x) = (x/k_0)^a$$

where $Q(x)$ is the mass cumulative % finer than size $x$, $k_0$ is the size modulus and $a$ is the distribution modulus. On the other hand, the 80% passing sizes can be obtained from the size distribution function if the size modulus and distribution modulus of the specific size and grinding condition are known.

Bond (1961) and Bond (1963) described a standard procedure to determine work index at length. Pongprasert et al. (1994) followed the procedure step by step using a lab ball mill to determine the Bond work index of feldspar ore from Nopphitam District, Thasala, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand. However, this procedure, when performed in a steady state condition with an equilibrium circulating load in a locked cycle test, is time-consuming. Berry and Bruce (1966) developed a comparative method to determine the grindability of an ore. By knowing a specific energy for the grinding of a reference ore, the work index of an unknown ore can be determined from Bond’s equation with the identical energy.

The Hardgrove test is a standard method used widely in the coal industry. To determine the relative grindability of coal, i.e., whether it is easy or difficult to pulverize, the Hardgrove grindability index (HGI) can be estimated from the test. A higher index indicates the coal is easier to pulverize. This is opposite to the pattern found with the Bond work index where soft mineral ores generally have low work indices. Aplan, Austin, Bonner, and Bhatia (1974) and Aplan (1996) have shown a correlation between HGI and $W_i$ in U.S. coal though these two indices are based on quite difference test procedures. The approximate relationship is based on this equation:

$$W_i = 511/(\text{HGI})^{0.96}$$

It should be noted that this empirical formula may be used to estimate the $W_i$ given the HGI or vice versa. This formula has been found to hold for coal samples with a wide variation in HGI as well as for several ore samples.

The purpose of this research was to do tests on the grindability of Nopphitam feldspar with emphasis on the HGI and the determination of the approximate $W_i$. Once the $W_i$ and $E_b$ of this reference feldspar is known, the approximate work index of an unknown feldspar can be rapidly estimated from rod-milling that conforms to the indicating conditions.

2. Methodology

Chemical analyses of Nopphitam reference feldspar samples were performed. The HGI of each sample was then determined from the Hardgrove grindability test. Then an approximate $W_i$ of each sample was calculated from the corresponding HGI value using Aplan’s formula. Meanwhile the $E_b$ of each sample was evaluated from rod-milling with the specific work index and conditions. Finally, the approximate $W_i$ of an unknown Sam Ngao feldspar was estimated from Bond’s formula with the average $E_b$, $X_{80,80}$ and $X_{1,80}$ of the rod-milling grindability test.

2.1 Chemical analyses

Nopphitam feldspar samples were collected from various mining sites at Thasala, Nakhon Si Thammarat in southern Thailand. These samples are the representatives of feldspar ores previously studied by Pongprasert et al. (1994) in the topic of Bond grindability work index determination. There were four reference samples coded as BY1, BY2A, BY2B, and PG2A. And one unknown feldspar sample named as FWC was collected from Sam Ngao, Tak Province in northern Thailand. All samples were analyzed by the Department of Primary Industries and Mines (DPIM), Regional Office 3, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

2.2 Hardgrove grindability test

Hardgrove grindability test was performed by the Geology Department, Mae Moh Mine Planning and Administration Division, Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand. The reference feldspar samples were pulverized according to the procedure described in the ASTM D-409-02 standard test method (American Society for Testing and Materials [ASTM], 1993) for grindability of coal by a ball-race Hardgrove mill. This standard procedure carried out by Rattanakawin and Tara (2012) was described elsewhere.

2.3 Rod-milling grindability test

From the method of Berry and Bruce, the specific energy may be determined by running a batch dry-grinding test. The test was performed using an 18x36 cm rod mill with material hold-up of about 0.08, media loading of about 0.4 and half interstitial filling. Each reference sample was ground by 8 steel rods for 15 min. Each rod had the dimensions of 3.5x35 cm. After that, the feed and product from the rod-milling were sieved using U.S. mesh series. Then the particle size distributions were plotted on log-log paper. Knowing the $X_{80,80}$ and $X_{80,80}$ from this Gaudin-Schuhmann plot or those values from Equation 2 together with the $W_i$ of reference samples from Pongprasert et al. (1994), the $E_b$ of this rod-milling grindability test was estimated from Equation 1. Conversely, an approximate $W_i$ of an unknown sample was determined knowing the averaged $E_b$ from this grindability test, $X_{80,80}$ and $X_{80,80}$. 

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Chemical composition of reference and unknown samples

The chemical composition of the reference and unknown feldspar samples are shown in Table 1. From the ratio of alkaline metal oxides considered, all samples could be characterized as sodium feldspar because the content of Na$_2$O was much higher than K$_2$O. This characterization was in accordance with the sodium feldspar samples from Thasala, Nakhon Si Thammarat by Department Primary Industries and Mines (DPIM, 2007) and from Nam Dip, Tak Province by Rattanakawin, Phuvichit, Nuntiya, and Tonthai, (2005). For example, the average content of Na$_2$O and K$_2$O in sodium feldspar from Sam Ngao, Tak Province was about 9% and 0.5% respectively.

Table 1. Chemical composition of reference and unknown feldspar samples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>SiO$_2$</th>
<th>Al$_2$O$_3$</th>
<th>Fe$_2$O$_3$</th>
<th>CaO</th>
<th>Na$_2$O</th>
<th>K$_2$O</th>
<th>LOI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BY1</td>
<td>77.18</td>
<td>13.19</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BY2A</td>
<td>70.15</td>
<td>16.75</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>10.98</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BY2B</td>
<td>68.48</td>
<td>19.68</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>9.87</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG2A</td>
<td>66.24</td>
<td>19.60</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWC</td>
<td>58.18</td>
<td>17.25</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>10.89</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>2.74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Hardgrove grindability and calculated work indices

The HGI values of reference sodium feldspar samples are shown in Table 2. It is clear that the HGI values were virtually the same with an average of 46.25. As a result, the $W_i$ calculated from these HGI values (Equation 3) of those corresponding samples was very similar at an average of 12.88 kW/STPH. This averaged $W_i$ was less comparable to that of the feldspar ore reported by Pongprasert et al. (1994) with the value of 11.25 kW/STPH. Then the specific energy calculated from Equation 1 equalled 7.42 kW/STPH.

Table 2. HGI and calculated $W_i$ from HGI of reference sodium feldspar samples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>HGI</th>
<th>Calculated $W_i$ from HGI (kW/STPH)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BY1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BY2A</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BY2B</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>12.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG2A</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>46.25</td>
<td>12.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contrary to the specific energy estimation, the approximate work index of the unknown FWC sample was 11.03 kW/STPH. This approximate value was calculated from Equation 1 knowing the average $E_0$ of the reference samples of 7.34 kW/STPH ($X_{p,80}=144$ and $X_{c,80}=3,549$ μm) from the plot in Figure 2. Compared to the average work index acquired from the above-mentioned manufacturers, the approximate work index of Sam Ngao sodium feldspar was plausibly the same. The precision of this value was indeed about 98%. Furthermore this methodology can be applied to any hard, brittle, and abrasive rock, such as granite, quartz, and porphyry, by running a batch dry-grinding test of an unknown sample using the rod mill at the given conditions. If the work index of quartz vein gold ore from Chatree Gold Mine in Phichit Province is determined by this method to be about 12.75 kW/STPH and the ore is to be ground with the capacity of 340 STPH from infinite size to 75 μm in order to liberate gold particles for further cyanidation (Akara Mining Ltd., n/a), an approximate horse power to drive the mill would be 5,000 calculated using the Bond formula for example. From the calculated mill power, an appropriate mill can be selected and sized from the manufacturers’ catalogs.

Table 3. Calculated $E_0$ from the reported $W_i$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Calculated $E_0$ from reported $W_i$ (kW/STPH)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BY1</td>
<td>7.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BY2A</td>
<td>7.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BY2B</td>
<td>7.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PG2A</td>
<td>7.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>7.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Conclusions

From the ratio of alkaline metal oxides in chemical composition, all samples were characterized as sodium feldspar. The work index of the Nopphitam reference sodium feldspar that was calculated from the Hardgrove grindability indices was about 12.88 kW/STPH. The averaged work index was less comparable to that of feldspar ore reported by Pongprasert et al. (1994). Also, it was different from the averaged values given by various mill manufacturers. Aplan’s formula seemed to be invalid for the sodium feldspar studied. Therefore, the reported value of 11.25 kW/STPH was used to calculate the specific energy of the rod-milling grindability test using the approach by Berry and Bruce.
from the average specific energy of the reference samples (7.34 kW/STPH), an approximate work index of an unknown feldspar can be rapidly estimated when we know the 80% passing size of both feed and product from the grindability test that conforms to the indicated conditions. It was found that the work index of Sam Ngao sodium feldspar was 11.03 kW/STPH. This value compares well with the average work index acquired from the manufactures. It is suggested that the time-consuming Bond procedure be employed with a number of corrections for different milling conditions to obtain more accurate work indices of sodium feldspar and other minerals.

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