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# **Aerodynamic Shape Design and Optimization**

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# AERODYNAMIC SHAPE DESIGN AND OPTIMIZATION

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## ABSTRACT

Realistic aerodynamic shapes can be designed using methodologies from computational fluid dynamics and optimization. Two basic categories of the inverse (design) formulation are surface flow design and flow field design. Several methods, in both categories, including novel methods based on flow control theory, are being discussed and critically evaluated. Many issues remain unresolved. These issues include: specification of a more appropriate set of design constraints, acceleration of iterative algorithms, minimization of artificial dissipation, increased versatility of the design methods, and direct use of the existing and future flow field analysis software.

## INTRODUCTION

In the general field of aerodynamics as with any field theory, we are faced with two problems: analysis and design. In the case of an analysis (direct problem) we are asked to predict the details of a flow field if the geometry of the object is specified. In the case of a design (inverse problem) we are asked to predict the geometry of the object, which must be compatible with the desired features of the flow field.

Thus, the field of aerodynamic shape design involves the ability to determine the geometry of an aerodynamic object that will satisfy the governing equations for the flow field and the associated boundary conditions. For example, it is possible to determine the coordinates of an airfoil if a surface pressure distribution is specified. The resulting designs can be subject to certain specified constraints. Examples which include such constraints may entail finding

aerodynamic configurations that are compatible with entirely shock-free transonic flow fields or obtaining shapes of objects that produce flow fields with minimum entropy generation, minimum noise generation, uniform surface heat flux, etc.

One of the first meetings on the general topic of shape design was the International Conference on Inverse Design Concepts and Optimization in Engineering Sciences (ICIDES). The first ICIDES was organized and held<sup>1</sup> on October 17-18, 1984, the second at the University of Texas at Austin, while ICIDES-II was held<sup>2</sup> on October 26-28, 1988, at the Pennsylvania State University. These conferences were followed by an AGARD Specialists' Meeting on Computational Methods for Aerodynamic Design (Inverse) and Optimization held<sup>3</sup> in Loen, Norway, on May 22-23, 1989; and by the AGARD/FDP Lecture Series on Inverse Methods in Airfoil Design for Aeronautical and Turbomachinery Applications held<sup>4</sup> at VKI, Belgium on May 14-18, 1990. The next ICIDES is scheduled for October 23-25, 1991 in Washington, D. C.

Depending on the prescribed features of the flow field, the design (inverse) methodologies can be grouped into two general categories: surface flow design and flow field design. Surface flow design involves specifying certain flow parameters (pressure, Mach number, etc.) on the surface of the flying object, then finding the shape that will generate the surface conditions without regard for the rest of the flow field. Flow field design, on the other hand, enforces certain global flow field features (shock-free flow, minimal entropy generation, etc.) at every point of the flow field by determining the shape that will satisfy these constraints locally. A large number of methods for performing the surface flow design have been developed, while only a few methods for the flow field design are known to exist.

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Mathematical models used in aerodynamic shape design are based on partial differential equations, integral equations, and algebraic equations. Detailed reviews were presented by Slooff<sup>5</sup> and Sobieczky.<sup>6</sup> For example, Zhukovski conformal mapping is actually a technique for designing a class of airfoil shapes with a specified pressure distribution at the surface that corresponds to a flow around a rotating cylinder. Here we are dealing with a simple algebraic expression, but that expression is based on a general solution of an integral equation formulation (a point-dipole and a point vortex) or a Laplace operator (a partial differential equation) governing the flow field. Thus, many global conformal mappings can be viewed as very special methods for designing certain simple shapes in a steady, planar, irrotational, inviscid flow field. Moreover, global conformal mapping is the only example that comes to mind as a method which combines the surface flow design concept and the flow field design concept. It guarantees that the resulting airfoil shapes have the specified surface distribution of the flow parameters while maintaining the irrotationality of the flow field.

In a more general situation, the arbitrary distribution of the surface flow parameters or an arbitrary field distribution of the flow parameters could result in shapes that are not physically meaningful and cannot be manufactured. For example, the lower surface and the upper surface of an airfoil could either cross over ("fish tail shapes") or never meet (open trailing edge shapes) although these solutions are mathematically acceptable (Fig. 1). Obviously, the problem rests in choosing an appropriate surface distribution of the flow parameters that satisfies certain global flow field constraints.<sup>7</sup> Yet, if the flow field design minimizes the entropy generation at every point in the field, the resulting shape would most likely have zero thickness and no stagnation points, that is, the optimal shape would most likely be a flat plate. Certain constraints on the geometry are needed since the final aerodynamic design is often incompatible with heat transfer, structural dynamics, acoustics, or manufacturing requirements.<sup>5-6</sup>

The main objection raised by designers when discussing the inverse (design) methodologies is that these methods create strictly point-designs rather than range-designs. In other words, an aerodynamic shape designed by using a surface flow design method will have the desired characteristics only at the design conditions.<sup>8</sup> If

the operating conditions (angle of attack, free stream Mach number, etc.) vary from the design conditions, then the configuration will have to be changed (Fig. 2) in order to maintain the desired surface flow parameters. Moreover, when designing transonic shock-free shapes with any of the surface flow design methods, the resulting configuration could have a mildly concave surface (Fig. 3) partially covered by the supersonic flow. As a result, a "hanging shock" or a "loose-foot" shock will form even at the design conditions.<sup>7</sup> The aerodynamic efficiency of such a configuration will not be satisfactory even at the design operating point. At off-design values for the Mach number or the angle of attack, the hanging shock violently re-attaches itself to the airfoil surface causing a rapid increase in drag due to the boundary layer separation. Consequently, it is more appropriate to design an almost shock-free shape even at the design conditions. Such shapes could have a weak family of shocks<sup>9</sup> that do not increase appreciably in strength at off-design conditions.

## SURFACE DATA SPECIFICATION

We must now face the question: what is the appropriate surface pressure distribution? Prevention of uncontrolled flow separation over a wider range of angles of attack, Mach numbers, and Reynolds numbers is the most important goal of an aerodynamic design. The answer to our question is not known. It might not be an appropriate question in light of the fact that the surface pressure distribution alone is not indicative of potentially hazardous flow field features such as an unexpected "hanging shock." Nevertheless, a number of researchers<sup>10-14</sup> have entertained this problem using a classical approach based on boundary layer information. A somewhat speculative approach using a concept of minimal kinetic energy rate has recently been reported.<sup>15</sup> A fast method capable of detecting laminar and turbulent flow separation from the prescribed surface pressure distribution would certainly be very useful. These relatively simple methods can help eliminate those candidate surface pressure distributions that would separate the flow. In addition, these methods leave the designer with the psychologically important feeling that he is still in command, although he realizes that all of his experience is inadequate when compared to a true mathematically constrained optimization.

Among the large number of publications using various surface flow designs, applications to single airfoils<sup>16-24</sup>, multi-component airfoils<sup>25</sup>,

cascades of airfoils<sup>26-32</sup>, ducts<sup>34</sup>, rotors<sup>35-45</sup>, isolated wings<sup>46-47</sup>, wing-body combinations<sup>48-50</sup>, nozzles<sup>51-52</sup> and inlets<sup>53</sup>, and axisymmetric bodies can be found.<sup>54</sup> Some of these methods have received wider acceptance than others. The general conclusion is that methods which are more versatile, and easier to comprehend and implement are more widely used. There are instances in which three-dimensional methods have been implemented even on personal computers.<sup>50</sup>

#### MODIFIED GARABEDIAN-McFADDEN METHOD

Methods like Garabedian-McFadden<sup>19</sup> and its modified<sup>20</sup> version are becoming quite popular since they require an extremely simple master code which can call any available flow field analysis code as a subroutine. Thus, as more sophisticated analysis codes become available, they can be directly substituted in the master code that computes corrections to the input geometry. The main drawback of the method is that it converges relatively slowly (Fig. 4). The iterative motion of the surface which is undergoing design can become irregular very quickly if some sort of control over the motion of surface points is not enforced. The surface motion model which treats the surface as an elastic membrane that moves according to a simple linear time dependent damped model<sup>19-20</sup> is quite effective in enforcing a relatively smooth convergence of the surface geometry. A more thorough study on the stability of the surface motion model is necessary, since the choice of coefficients in the model<sup>19-20</sup> can seriously affect the convergence rate and the stability of the entire iterative process.

#### STREAM FUNCTION BASED METHODS

A very interesting concept, termed Stream-Function-as-a-Coordinate (SFC), is based on a transformed stream function formulation where the vertical coordinate of each stream line is treated as an unknown. Thus, the SFC formulation<sup>32-33</sup> solves directly for the unknown geometric coordinates which are the coordinates of the stream lines (Fig. 5). A three dimensional version of the SFC formulation remains to be developed. A similar concept derived from the boundary element integral method<sup>18</sup> gives a fully converged solution for an airfoil design on a personal computer in 10-20 iterations.

Another method that is based on the interplay of the stream function and the potential function in

irrotational subsonic inviscid flows is due to Stanitz.<sup>34</sup> He has obtained fascinating configurations of channels and three-dimensional ducts subject to a specified surface pressure along the duct walls (Fig. 6).

#### TAYLOR SERIES EXPANSION METHOD

An extremely efficient and simple, although approximate, method has been developed in China<sup>37-38</sup> and reportedly can be used on a pocket programmable calculator. The method is based on prescribing, say, a Mach number distribution along the mid-passage streamline and then deducing values of the Mach number on the top and the bottom of the passage by expanding the prescribed data in the vertical direction using Taylor series. With more terms in the Taylor series, a larger gap-to-chord cascade can be designed. Since the analyticity is carried to an extreme, little work needs to be performed iteratively. As a consequence, the method converges quickly. Errors in this method rapidly increase towards the stagnation points particularly if they are blunt. The method is applicable to radial turbomachinery<sup>39</sup> as well (Fig. 7).

#### NEW THREE-DIMENSIONAL FORMULATIONS

Highly sophisticated and computationally complex computer codes have been developed and successfully applied in the design of three-dimensional coaxial nozzles<sup>51</sup> and turbomachinery blading<sup>40</sup>. The model includes a complete set of the three-dimensional Euler equations of gas dynamics. Although complex, the method converges quickly since the geometry corrections are calculated using information that propagates along the characteristics.

Several new formulations<sup>41-45</sup> for inviscid quasi three-dimensional and fully three-dimensional turbomachinery using the flow field design approach are analytically novel and interesting. The main drawback of these approaches is that the basic model does not take into account either viscosity or turbulence.

Takanashi<sup>46</sup> successfully applied the general concept of using a small master code to call any available analysis code as a subroutine in the process of surface flow design. The method converges extremely quickly because a small perturbation integral formulation is used to evaluate local geometry corrections of the wing surface.

Recently, surface flow inverse designs of wings<sup>47</sup> and a wing-body combination<sup>48-50</sup> (Fig. 8) were successfully performed using full potential transonic equation solvers<sup>47-48</sup> or higher order surface panel methods<sup>49-50</sup> together with the surface transpiration concept.

Inverse designs of supersonic nozzles<sup>51-52</sup>, supercritical jet engine inlets<sup>53</sup>, and axisymmetric bodies<sup>54</sup> in incompressible potential flow have also been performed. The approach of Ives<sup>53</sup> is especially innovative and unique.

#### TRANSONIC SHOCK-FREE DESIGN

Probably the best known method for the flow field design is a hodograph based method<sup>55-58</sup> for designing transonic shock-free shapes. Actually, the method is a combination of both surface flow design (the surface Mach number can be specified on a point-by-point basis) and the flow field design formulations (it can be guaranteed that no shocks occur in the flow field). Consequently, the method suffers from the problems previously mentioned (open trailing edges and fish-tail shapes) that are associated with both general approaches to design. The method was well publicized in the seventies and the resulting software<sup>57</sup> found its way into industry. Nevertheless, methods based on the hodograph transformation are not applicable to three dimensions. Since the hodograph method is based on an elliptic continuation approach<sup>57</sup> it requires two real and two imaginary characteristics. Needless to say, it is a highly complicated method and the resulting software is not easy to modify. The entire method is well described in a textbook by Schrier.<sup>58</sup>

An alternative method is known in the West as Sobieczky's fictitious gas<sup>59-60</sup> or in Japan as Nakamura's gas<sup>61</sup>, since both researchers have developed and published the method independently. The concept is based on the fact that shocks can form only in supersonic flow, that is, if the governing partial differential equation is locally hyperbolic. Consequently, if the conditions for possible shock formations are to be eliminated, the governing partial differential equations should never be allowed to become hyperbolic. Sobieczky and Nakamura ensured this by switching from an isentropic expression for density and local speed of sound to an appropriate analytical fictitious density relation at every point in the field and on the boundary where the flow is likely to become

supersonic. The resulting computations are acceptable in the subsonic regions (where the isentropic relations are used), but are not acceptable in the supersonic regions (where the fictitious gas relations are used). Nevertheless, the resulting sonic line which separates the two regions, is compatible with both the isentropic and the fictitious gas relations (Fig. 9). We can now use the isentropic relations in the fictitious gas domain, where the governing equations will be locally strictly hyperbolic. Hence, the sonic line values of the stream function can be used as initial data for integration of the locally hyperbolic system. Moreover, the system becomes linear if transformed to a rheograph plane<sup>59-60</sup> characterized by the Prandtl-Meyer function and the local velocity vector angle. The new shape coordinates will be determined from the condition that the stream function should maintain a constant value at every point of the airfoil surface. This method is fairly simple to comprehend and implement in the existing full potential codes. Nevertheless, the fictitious gas method does not allow us the freedom to specify surface values of flow parameters. It only guarantees that if our choice for the fictitious gas density - Mach number relation is not too restrictive, the supersonic bubble will become shallow and stretched along the surface (Fig. 9), which results in an entirely shock-free flow field. The method is suitable for redesignning existing airfoils<sup>59-63</sup>, cascades of airfoils<sup>64-66</sup> (Fig. 10), quasi three-dimensional rotors<sup>67</sup>, wings<sup>68-70</sup> without having to worry about surface cross-over, fish-tail shapes and hanging shocks.

#### OPTIMIZATION

Due to the fact that aerodynamic shape design represents only a part of the overall design of a flying vehicle, the need for interdisciplinary<sup>71</sup> optimization arises. Simultaneously, optimization algorithms are finding applicability in pure aerodynamic design<sup>72-88</sup>. The optimization algorithms are presently often used to minimize the difference between the specified and the computed surface flow data. This is obviously not a very imaginative use of computational resources, since optimization codes are known to require a large number of flow field analysis solutions. Such use of an optimizer has nothing to do with optimizing the aerodynamic shape. Noteworthy exceptions involve maximizing lift-to-drag ratio for an isolated airfoil<sup>74</sup> and a multicomponent airfoil<sup>77</sup>, minimizing the total pressure loss across the shock waves in a supersonic inlet<sup>80</sup>, minimizing the total pressure loss in a viscous flow inside an S-shaped duct<sup>81</sup>,

and optimizing over a range of operating conditions.<sup>82</sup> Recent publications<sup>83-84</sup> expose interesting and potentially promising sensitivity analysis formulations for the fast evaluation and optimization of off-design conditions. The approach of Rizk<sup>85</sup> is especially welcome since it allows for a stable iterative algorithm where an optimizer is used on each updated configuration even before the flow field has converged to the new geometry. As a consequence, a typical airfoil design involves an equivalent of 5-10 fully converged flow field solutions. A very readable and thorough comparative analysis of optimization-based approaches was performed by Frank and Shubin.<sup>86</sup> They also offer an alternative more economical approach. Besides a wide variety of gradient-based<sup>72</sup> optimization algorithms, it should be pointed out that truly remarkable results were obtained using an evolution type algorithm<sup>77</sup> which seems to be less sensitive to local minimums.

#### CONTROL THEORY

Control theory applied to systems of partial differential equations was first discussed in the West by Lions<sup>87</sup>. Recently, several researchers<sup>88-94</sup> have looked into using control theory concepts in aerodynamic shape design. In this context, the control theory can be thought of as a minimization process performed in a continuous function space, which is certainly the case when optimizing the large number of variables. The approach is novel and mathematically challenging since most of the fluid flow theory is based on partial differential equations, while the control theory is usually formulated via ordinary differential equations. The treatise by Abergel and Temam<sup>93</sup> appears to be the most complete, while the new publication by Cabuk and Modi<sup>94</sup> offers the most readable text on this subject and provides convincing results (Fig. 11) for design of nozzles with minimum shear stress at the walls. Their preliminary results dispel earlier reservations that these formulations might not be computationally efficient since they involve solution of an additional set of adjoint equations and several more interface equations.

#### CONCLUSIONS

We have surveyed a vast number of different aerodynamic shape design concepts and attempted to classify them. Characteristics, both positive and negative, of the more prominent methods were outlined. Future research is expected to concentrate on the use of Navier-

Stokes equations and applications to three-dimensional configurations. Interdisciplinary constrained optimization will need to play a more prominent role. Control theory and its variations are the most promising concepts for interdisciplinary aerodynamic shape design which involves a large number of variables.

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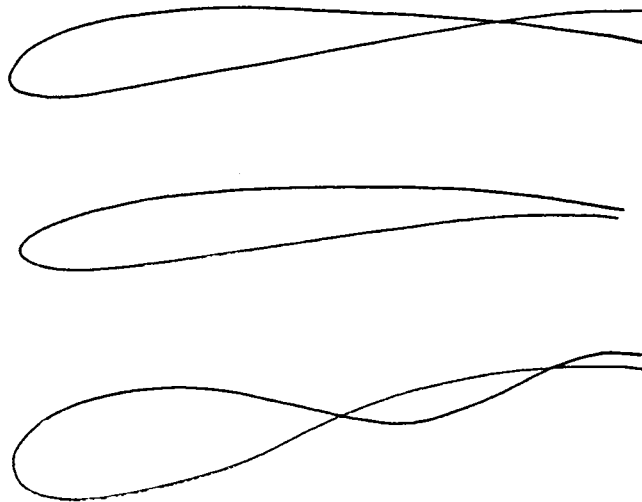


Fig. 1 A sketch of possible airfoil shapes resulting from an inverse design without constraints

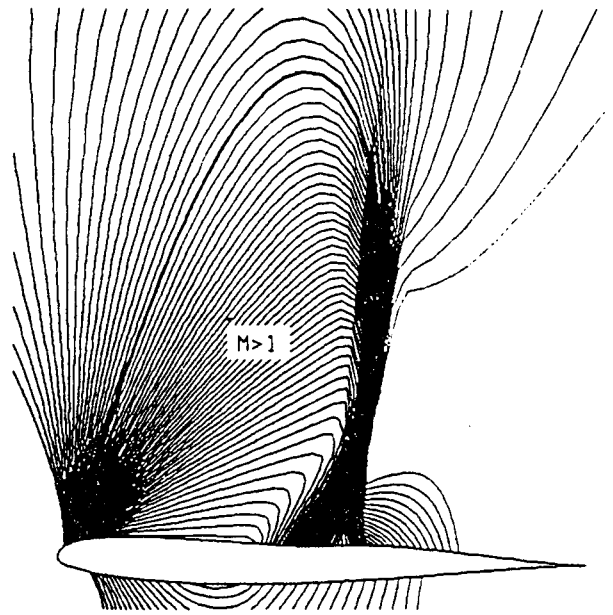
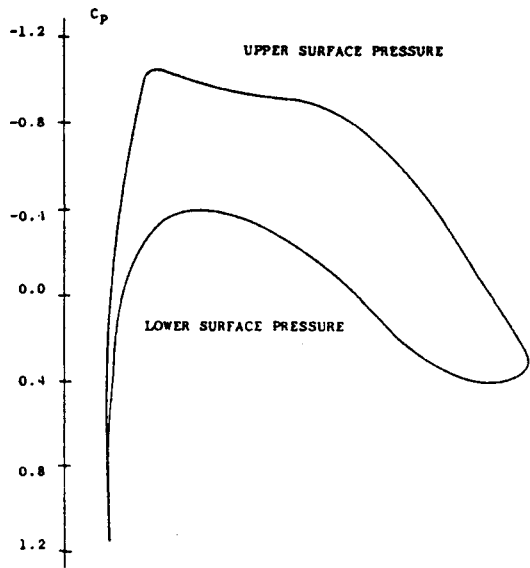


Fig. 3 An example of a "hanging" shock<sup>7</sup> in the flow field when using shock-free surface flow design

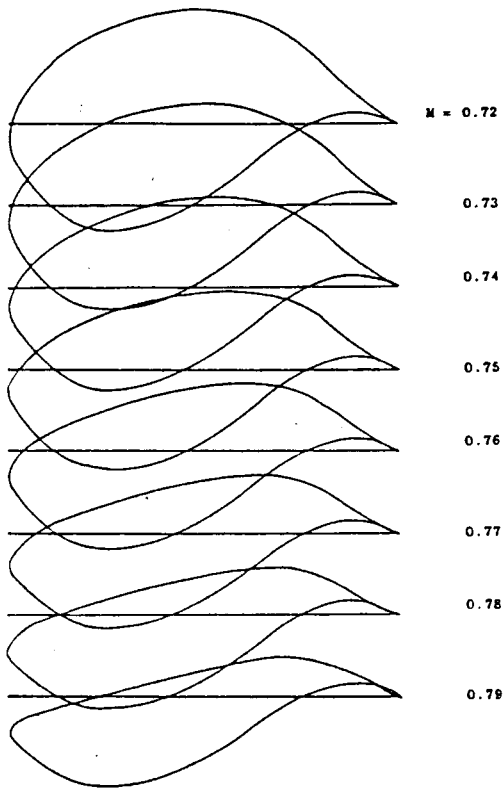


Fig. 2 Airfoil shapes<sup>8</sup> (y-axis magnified five times) having identical surface pressure distributions at different Mach numbers

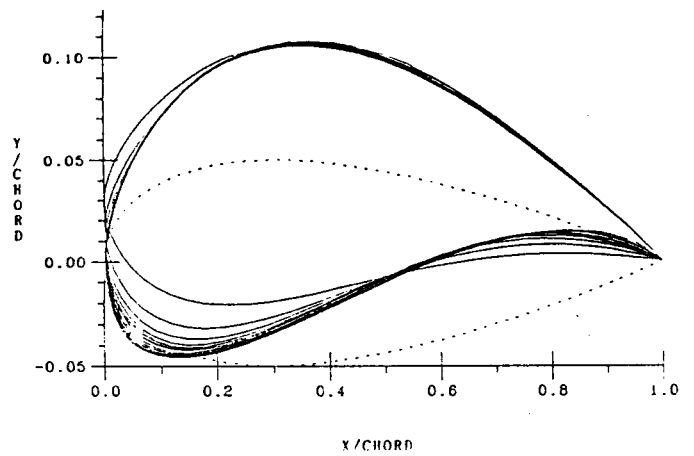


Fig. 4 An example of the convergence history<sup>20</sup> using modified Garabedian-McFadden method and surface panel analysis code. Initial shape was a NACA0010 airfoil. Target pressure distribution corresponds to a 15% thick cambered Zhukovski airfoil

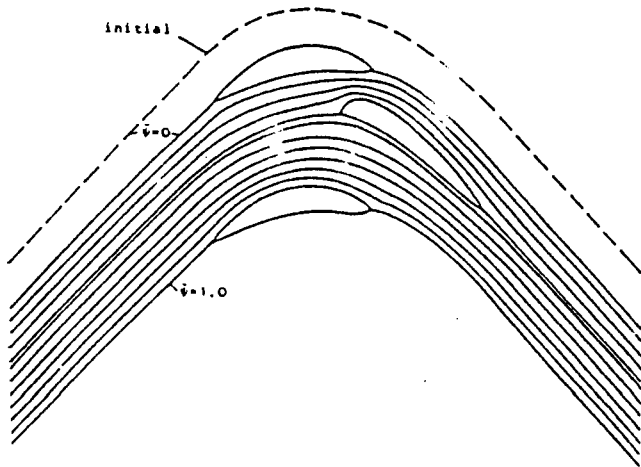


Fig. 5 SFC method<sup>32-33</sup> generates streamline shapes as its solution. Example of a cascade designed simultaneously with a splitter blade

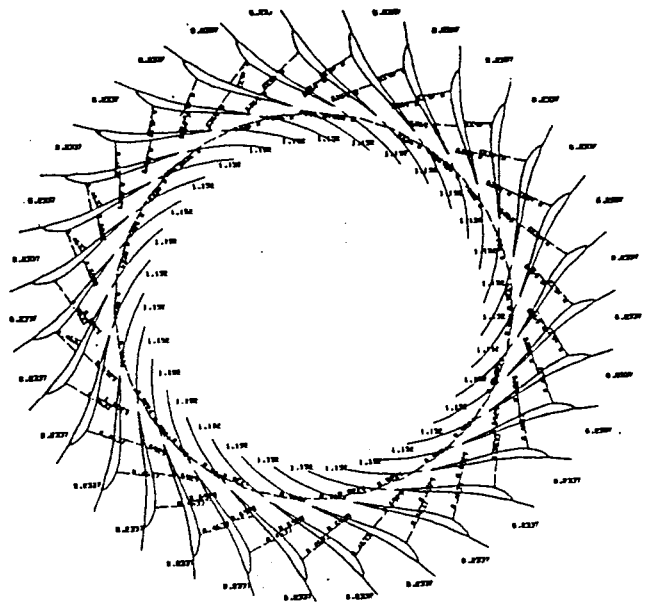


Fig. 7 Taylor series expansion method<sup>37-38</sup> can be used in turbomachinery cascade design<sup>39</sup>

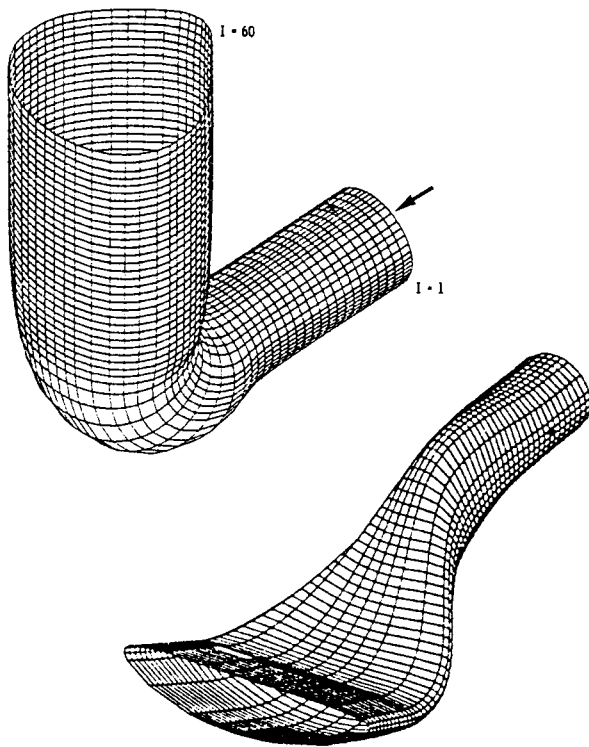


Fig. 6 Stream function - potential function inverse design method (Stanitz<sup>34</sup>) can generate complex realistic three-dimensional configurations

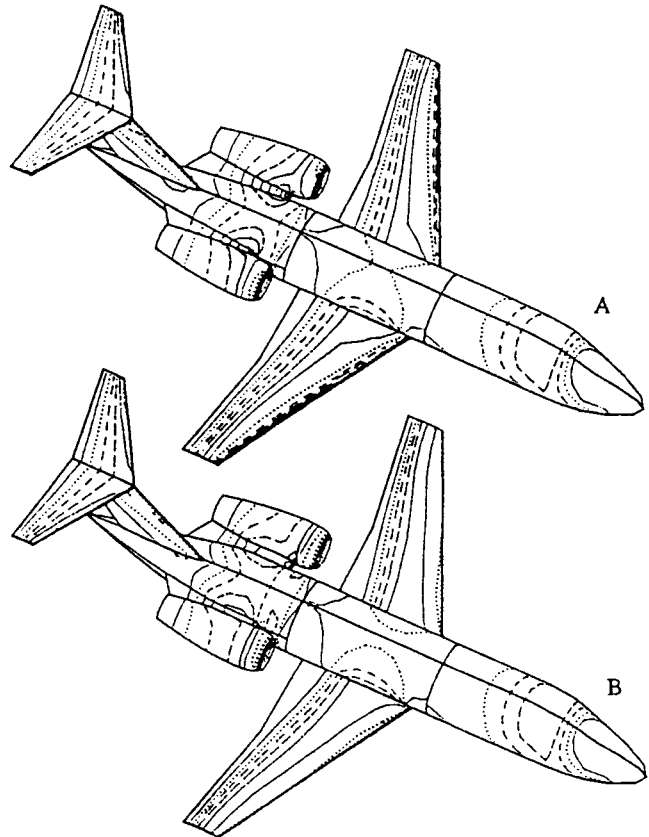


Fig. 8 Entire business jet configuration can be optimized<sup>50</sup> on a personal computer using surface transpiration concept and panel method: a) before, and b) after three optimization cycles

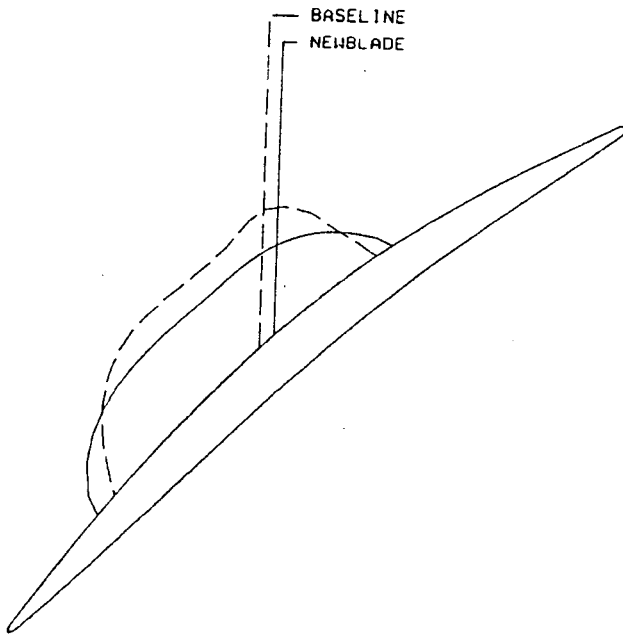
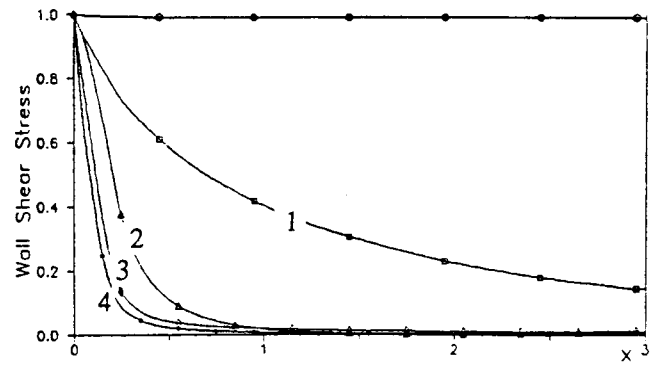
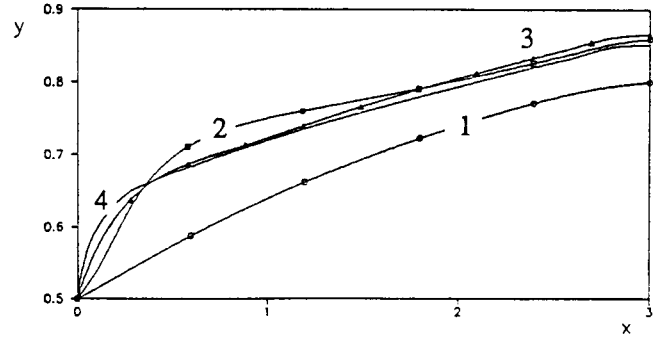


Fig. 9 Sonic line shapes before and after the shock-free<sup>67</sup> design of a compressor cascade using fictitious gas formulation



A



B

Fig. 11 Two-dimensional nozzle design using Navier-Stokes equations<sup>94</sup> and control theory: a) iteration history for the surface shear stress and, b) iteration history for the nozzle geometry

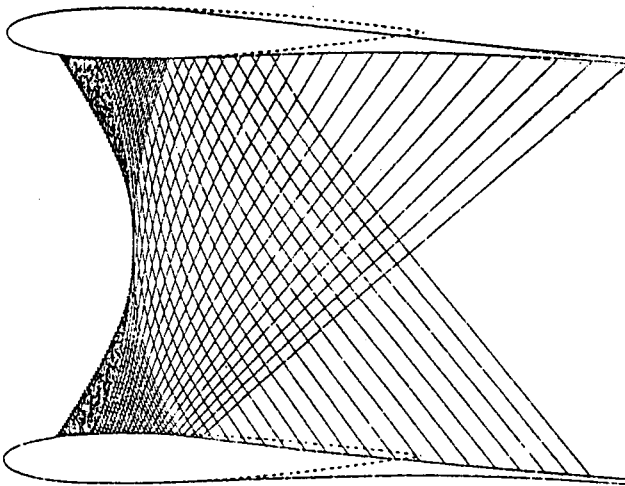


Fig. 10 Shock-free fully choked transonic cascade designed<sup>66</sup> using fictitious gas concept