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TWO-DIMENSIONAL DIFFUSER SHAPE OPTIMIZATION

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Abstract

An approach for the optimization of turbulent flow in diffusers is presented. A methodology is developed to integrate a finite volume-based computational fluid dynamics (CFD) analysis and an optimization tool using micro-genetic algorithms (μ-GA). The CFD model is based on the Reynolds-averaged Navier-Stokes equations, with the standard k-ε closure turbulence model.

This methodology is tested on the optimization through wall contouring of a given two-dimensional diffuser with a tailpipe discharge. Different area ratios are used in the study with a fixed diffuser length to inlet width ratio. The results indicate that the diffuser performance can be improved by this method. The improvement is marginal for small area ratios and increases substantially for great one.

Keywords: Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD), Genetic Algorithms, Optimization, 2-D Diffuser, Turbulent Flow

Nomenclature

AR area ratio, W_2/W_1 for 2-D diffuser

$C_{\varepsilon 1}$, $C_{\varepsilon 2}$ constants in the k-ε model

C_{μ} eddy viscosity coefficient

C_p static pressure recovery coefficient

F objective function

I turbulence intensity, (%)

k turbulent kinetic energy, (m^2/s^2)

L length of diffuser, (m)

P turbulence energy generation rate, (m^2/s^3)

p_{Ex} average static pressure at the diffuser exit, (Pa)

p_{In} average static pressure at the diffuser inlet, (Pa)

Re   Reynolds number, $\rho U_{In} W_1 / \mu$

U mean streamwise velocity component, (m/s)

U_{In} average inlet velocity, (m/s)

V mean transverse velocity component, (m/s)

W_1 width of diffuser at inlet, (m)

W_2 width of diffuser at exit, (m)

x_1 abscissa of the first control point, (m)

x_2 abscissa of the second control point, (m)

y_1 ordinate of the first control point, (m)

y_2 ordinate of the second control point, (m)

y_{Ex} ordinate of the diffuser exit point, (m)

Greek Symbols

α divergence angle, [$AR = 1 + 2(L/W_1)\tan\alpha$], (deg)

ε dissipation rate, (m^2/s^3)

μ laminar viscosity of fluid, (Pa.s)

μ_{eff} effective viscosity, (Pa.s)

μ_t turbulent viscosity, (Pa.s)

ρ density of fluid, (kg/m^3)

σ_k, σ_ε turbulent Prandtl numbers in k and ε transport equations

1. INTRODUCTION

Well-designed diffusers should cause minimal total pressure losses and deliver nearly uniform flow at their exits. In some engineering applications, short straight diffusers are demanded for weight and space considerations, resulting in large changes in cross-sectional area. This may develop strong secondary flow and boundary layer separation. Consequently, an increment in the total pressure loss at the diffuser exit is resulted.

Experimental studies on the design of symmetric diffusers dealt with the best choice of sizing variables namely; the area ratio AR and the diffuser length to inlet width ratio L/W_1. More sophisticated techniques for reducing or even avoiding flow separation can be found in engineering practice. These techniques include: (i) boundary layer suction, (ii) boundary layer blowing, (iii) insertion of guide vanes, and (iv) wall contouring. The last technique has advantages over the other techniques such as: no auxiliary equipment is required as in methods (i) and (ii) and that the flow passage is not partially blocked as in method (iii).

The use of numerical optimization for laminar and turbulent flow applications has received attention in recent researches. Adventure of high-speed computers and availability of reliable CFD solvers greatly simplify the numerical optimization processes to achieve complex shape designs for optimum performance. It should be mentioned that the accuracy of any optimization process relies on the accuracy of the CFD code, which implies that inaccuracies in the code shade doubt on the outcome of the optimization. For the CFD code, inadequate turbulence modeling might cause the imprecision.

Table 1 shows a summary of previous numerical studies on the optimization of 2-D and conical diffusers for incompressible flow. Three-dimensional S-shaped diffusers (e.g. Lefantzi and Knight [1]) and diffusers with compressible flow are not included.

Çabuk and Modi [2] derived a variational formulation of the problem of determining the profile of a plane diffuser (of given upstream width and length) for a maximum static pressure rise. They obtained the diffuser shape as well as the diffuser width at the exit section. Their results showed that the numerically obtained C_p values for the optimum diffuser were always higher than those for straight diffusers of the same area ratio at several Reynolds numbers in laminar flow regime.

Svenningsen et al. [3] presented an approach to the quasi-analytical sensitivity analysis for CFD problems. The quasi-analytical sensitivity analysis forms a substantial part of an optimization tool based on sequential linear programming. They applied their method on a two-dimensional laminar-flow diffuser to maximize the pressure recovery by altering the wall shape. Compared to a straight wall diffuser, the optimized shape constituted a minor improvement (3% in C_p).

Cholaseuk et al. [4,7] explored the optimum design of fluid flow devices using designed numerical experiments, and the stability (robustness) of such designs, respectively. The search pattern during the optimization process was suggested by the design of experiment methodology. The proposed framework was tested with one potential flow problem and two laminar-flow diffuser problems. Significant improvements in C_p for both plane and conical diffusers were achieved for all studied Reynolds numbers. For example, for a Reynolds number of 100, the initial straight diffuser produced a C_p value of 0.41 while the optimum-profile diffuser produced 0.46.

Madsen et al. [5] presented results from derivative-based design optimization of turbulent flow subsonic diffusers with straight centerline. They considered the two-well known techniques for reducing flow separation, namely: contouring of the diffuser wall and insertion of straight guide vanes. For diffuser designs with small area expansions and no flow separation, the potential gain from optimization was marginal, whereas the pressure recovery of wide-angled diffusers improved substantially.

Madsen et al. [6] used the response surface techniques for design optimization of a two-dimensional diffuser. The wall shape was optimized to achieve maximum pressure recovery, with two different profile representations for the wall. Their analysis resulted in a diffuser design, which was mostly bell shaped with the end of the diffuser wall bent concavely outward. The gain in pressure recovery from optimization was small (1%), as there was a large family of diffusers with essentially identical performance.

Eisinger and Ruprecht [8], in their study of the shape optimization of a turbine draft tube, applied different optimization algorithms, among others, on two axially symmetric diffusers. In the first case, the only optimized parameter was the length of the diffuser while for the second case, a combination of two diffusers, two parameters were optimized: the length and the exit diameter of the first diffuser. The genetic algorithm showed a very robust behavior, but it required a distinctly more optimization cycles and computational time.

Table 1. Previous numerical studies of diffuser optimization for incompressible flow

Authors	Optimization Method	Type of Diffuser	Type of Flow	Re	Area Ratio	Ratio L/W_1
Çabuk and Modi [2]	Adjoint operator method	2-D	Laminar	$50 - 500$	–	3
Svenningsen et al. [3]	Sequential linear programming	2-D	Laminar	400	1.68	3.78
Cholaseuk et al. [4]	Black-box optimization	2-D & Conical	Laminar	$50 - 400$	–	3
Madsen et al. [5]	Sequential linear programming	2-D	Turbulent	2×10^5	$1.5 - 3$	3
Madsen et al. [6]	Response surface techniques	2-D	Turbulent	2×10^5	2	1.5
Cholaseuk et al. [7]	Black-box optimization	2-D	Laminar	100	$2 - 2.8$	3
Eisinger and Ruprecht [8]	Extrem, Simplex, and genetic methods	Conical	Turbulent	–	4	$2 - 12$
Lund et al. [9]	Sequential linear programming	2-D	Turbulent	2×10^5	3	3
Madsen and Langthjem [10]	Multifidelity response surface approximations	2-D	Turbulent	2×10^5	$1.5 - 3.5$	1.5

Lund et al. [9] studied the wall contouring of a 2-D symmetrical diffuser for maximum pressure recovery. They studied one of the diffusers used by Madsen et al. [5]. The wall contour was described with a B-spline having 5 control points that were allowed to move vertically. The value of C_p was increased from 0.665 to 0.671, i.e., only a small improvement was obtained by changing the wall contour in this case.

Madsen and Langthjem [10] obtained the optimum area ratios AR for fixed-length diffusers using the multifidelity response surface and the sensitivity-based search optimization. In terms of the maximum static pressure recovery, the two optimal designs were practically indistinguishable (C_p-values within 1%).

The objective of the present research is to develop a methodology to integrate a surface representation technique, structured grid generator, a Reynolds-averaged Navier-Stokes solver and a genetic algorithm optimization tool to maximize the static pressure recovery coefficient of subsonic diffusers.

2. Optimization Loop

Optimization methods may be divided into two basic categories, namely, gradient-based, and non-gradient-based. The former category includes the classical steepest descent method, conjugate gradient method and sequential quadratic programming method. These techniques

rely upon an accurate estimate of the gradient of the objective function, which may not always be feasible.

Non-gradient-based optimization algorithms require only the evaluation of the objective function for a given design variable. Recent researches have focused on evolutionary algorithms that mimic the Darwinian process of natural evolution to achieve an optimum design. Evolutionary Algorithms have been applied to a broad scope of engineering design problems, and are adopted in this study.

The Genetic Algorithms have some exclusive advantages as robustness, intrinsic parallelism and globality and its disadvantage is the expense. In general, the number of function evaluations required for the Genetic Algorithms optimization process to converge exceeds the number required by a finite-difference gradient-based optimization.

The automated optimization process is based on the development of several tools linked within a loop algorithm presented in Fig. 1. The heart of the optimization loop, implemented for designing diffusers, is called the optimizer. The automated loop links together an optimizer (optimization algorithm) with a fluid-flow simulator. Declaring the optimization geometrical parameters and implementing the geometry constraints to reduce the computational time, the optimizer generates a candidate diffuser that is described by the geometrical parameters. These values of the parameters are passed to the flow field analysis. This analysis consists of a geometrical processor to describe the studied geometry, a grid generator to create the grid, a flow solver (Reynolds-averaged Navier-Stokes simulations) and a post processor for the presentation of the calculated flow variables. Based on the simulation results, the objective function is calculated. The optimizer generates another candidate diffuser described by new values for the geometrical parameters and the loop continues until an optimum objective function is reached which gives the optimum shape.

The following sections describe the four major points of the automatic optimization procedure, namely: parameterization of the geometry, CFD-simulation, objective function, and optimization algorithm.
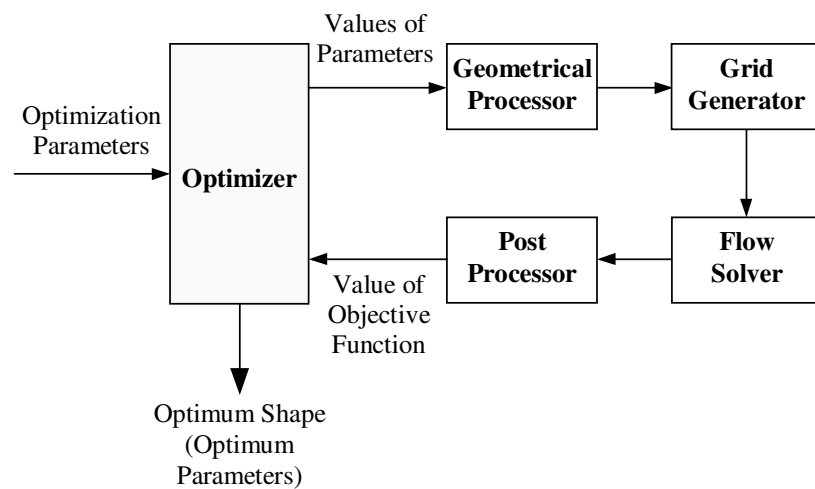

Fig. 1. Structure of the mathematical optimization loop

3. Diffuser Wall Parameterization

Great importance is given to the parameterization criterion of the diffuser geometry since it affects both the validity and efficiency of the optimization. Describing the diffuser geometry by a large number of parameters is recommended in order to explore a wide range of possibilities in the total search space. However, it is known that the larger the search space, the higher the computational effort.

Diffuser wall parameterizations can be achieved by using polynomial functions or parametric curves such as B-splines and Bezier curves. Polynomial functions are chosen to represent the two-dimensional diffuser contour because they are simple curve representation. Polynomials are often considered impractical for design optimization because of a tendency to produce undesirable wiggles. For diffusers, this problem is eliminated by enforcing analytically derived conditions of curve monotonicity, (Madsen et al. [6]).

The geometry of the two-dimensional diffuser and its details are shown in Fig. 2. The baseline diffuser corresponds to the proposed configuration of Madsen et al. [6]. The geometry consists of an inlet section, a diffuser and an outlet section. The diffuser wall contour is defined by a fourth-order polynomial:

$$y(x) = a_4 x^4 + a_3 x^3 + a_2 x^2 + a_1 x + a_0 \tag{1}$$

The polynomial curve must pass through four points: the inlet point (In), the two control points (1) and (2) and the exit point (Ex), Fig. 2. The two control points define the shape as well as the curvature of the inlet and outlet edges of the diffuser. Each coordinate for the control point could take a value inside a predetermined range defining a family of "realistic" shapes. In the present study, the abscissas of the control points are uniformly spaced along the diffuser length, i.e., $x_1 = 0.5 W_1$ and $x_2 = W_1$. The ordinates of the two control points y_1 and y_2 are the design variables and they are chosen inside a fixed range of acceptable values. At the diffuser inlet, the wall contour is C^1-continuous to avoid a sharp edge entrance, which may lead to undesirable onset of separation. This tangent continuity gives the condition of zero slope $dy/dx = 0$ at the diffuser inlet ($x = 0$). Applying this condition, the polynomial function is reduced to:

$$y(x) = a_4 x^4 + a_3 x^3 + a_2 x^2 \tag{2}$$

The coordinates of the two control points and the exit point are used to solve Eq. (2) and obtain the polynomial coefficients in terms of control point positions y_1 and y_2:

$$a_2 = (12 y_1 - 3 y_2)/W_1^2 + 4 y_{Ex}/(9 W_1^2)$$
$$a_3 = (-20 y_1 + 8 y_2)/W_1^3 - 4 y_{Ex}/(3 W_1^3)$$
$$a_4 = (8 y_1 - 4 y_2)/W_1^4 + 8 y_{Ex}/(9 W_1^4) \tag{3}$$

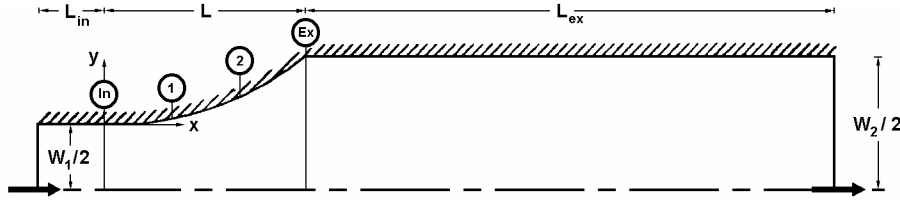where the ordinate of the exit point $y_{Ex} = 0.5 W_1(AR - 1)$.

Fig. 2. Baseline 2-D diffuser

3.1. Monotonicity Constraints

Experimental and numerical evidence indicates that maximum pressure recovery in diffusers occurs at the border of appreciable flow separation. For this reason, strongly separated diffuser flows should be avoided, making it reasonable to restrict the design space to monotonic wall shapes.

Based on experiments, Carlson et al. [11] established the highest pressure recovery coefficients from bell-shaped diffuser designs. This has been established by numerical optimization of diffusers with laminar flow, Çabuk and Modi [2] and Svenningsen et al. [3], and with turbulent flow, Madsen [12].

- The monotonicity in the position of control points yields:

$$0 \leq y_1 \leq y_2 \leq y_{Ex} \tag{4}$$

- For a wall shape $y(x)$ to be monotonic, it is required that the first-order derivative does not change its sign:

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = x\left(4a_4x^2 + 3a_3x + 2a_2\right) = xZ(x) > 0 \qquad \text{for} \qquad 0 \leq x \leq 1.5W_1$$

Since x is positive in the considered interval, it is sufficient for monotonicity that $Z(x)$ is positive in the same interval. The two conditions $Z(x=0)>0$ and $Z(x=1.5W_1)>0$ yield:

$$y_2 < 4y_1 + \frac{4}{27}y_{Ex} \tag{5}$$

$$y_2 < y_1 + \frac{13}{27}y_{Ex} \tag{6}$$

Figure 3 shows the ordinates of the two control points y_1 and y_2 non-dimensionalized by the ordinate of the exit point y_{Ex}. Both initial and reduced design spaces are depicted in Fig. 3. Equations (4)-(6) are represented by lines a, b and c, respectively. The initial design space is the upper triangle, while the reduced design is that given by the dotted surface.
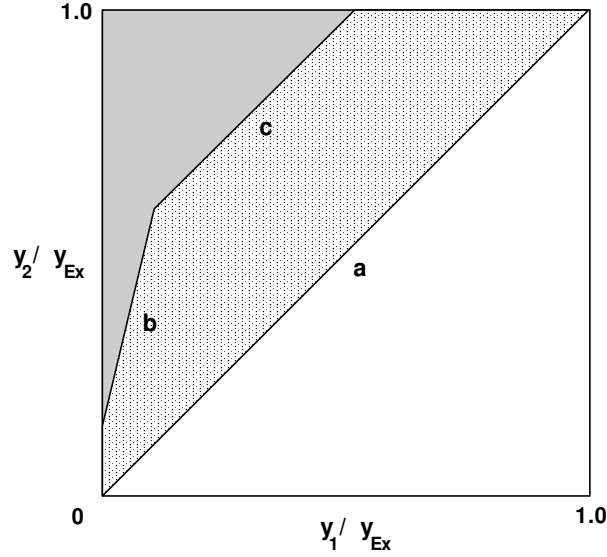
Fig. 3. Initial and reduced design spaces

4. CFD-Simulation

The CAFFA (Computer-Aided Fluid Flow Analysis) (Ferziger and Perić, [13]) Navier-Stokes solver was used in this study to evaluate the performance of the two-dimensional diffusers. CAFFA is a general purpose CFD code that solves 2D Reynolds-averaged Navier-Stokes equations using a body-fitted finite volume discretization method.

4.1. Governing Equations

The numerical solution of the time-averaged Navier-Stokes equations with the standard k-ε model of turbulence are employed in the present work.

The steady transport equation for a general dependent variable ϕ can be written in two-dimensional as follows:

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial x}\left(\rho U \phi\right)+\frac{\partial}{\partial y}\left(\rho V \phi\right)=\frac{\partial}{\partial x}\left(\Gamma_\phi \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial x}\right)+\frac{\partial}{\partial y}\left(\Gamma_\phi \frac{\partial \phi}{\partial y}\right)+S_\phi \tag{7}$$

Γ_ϕ is the exchange coefficient and S_ϕ is an accumulation of source terms not explicitly represented by the remaining terms of the equation. The dependent variable ϕ can be unity (mass conservation), U or V (momentum conservation), k (turbulence energy), or ε (energy dissipation).

The governing equations and the constants used in the standard k-ε model (Launder and Spalding, [14]) are given in Tables 2 and 3, respectively.

The isotropic effective viscosity is given by:

$$\mu_{eff} = \mu + \mu_t = \mu + C_\mu \rho \frac{k^2}{\varepsilon} \tag{8}$$

Table 2. Transport equations

Equation	ϕ	Γ_ϕ	S_ϕ
Continuity	1	0	0
x-momentum	U	μ_{eff}	$-\dfrac{\partial p}{\partial x}+\dfrac{\partial}{\partial x}\left(\mu_{eff}\dfrac{\partial U}{\partial x}\right)+\dfrac{\partial}{\partial y}\left(\mu_{eff}\dfrac{\partial V}{\partial x}\right)$
y-momentum	V	μ_{eff}	$-\dfrac{\partial p}{\partial y}+\dfrac{\partial}{\partial x}\left(\mu_{eff}\dfrac{\partial U}{\partial y}\right)+\dfrac{\partial}{\partial y}\left(\mu_{eff}\dfrac{\partial V}{\partial y}\right)$
Transport of k	k	$\mu+\dfrac{\mu_t}{\sigma_k}$	$\rho P-\rho\varepsilon$
Transport of ε	ε	$\mu+\dfrac{\mu_t}{\sigma_\varepsilon}$	$C_{\varepsilon1}\dfrac{\rho\varepsilon}{k}P-C_{\varepsilon2}\dfrac{\rho\varepsilon^2}{k}$

Table 3. Constants adopted by the standard k-ε model [14]

C_μ	$C_{\varepsilon1}$	$C_{\varepsilon2}$	σ_k	σ_ε
0.09	1.44	1.92	1.0	1.3

The production of turbulent kinetic energy P is given by:

$$P=\frac{\mu_t}{\rho}\left[\left(\frac{\partial U}{\partial y}+\frac{\partial V}{\partial x}\right)^2+2\left(\frac{\partial U}{\partial x}\right)^2+2\left(\frac{\partial V}{\partial y}\right)^2\right] \tag{9}$$

4.2. Boundary Conditions

The boundary conditions required to solve the system of governing differential equations are presented in this section. Generally there are four types of boundaries: inlet, outlet, symmetry axis and solid walls.

Inlet. A uniform velocity profile is prescribed at the inlet. Values of k and ε are estimated according to the equations: $k_{in}=1.5(IU_{In})^2$ where U_{In} is the average inlet velocity and I is the turbulence intensity (= 3 %) and $\varepsilon_{in}=C_\mu k^{3/2}/(0.3\,W_1)$.

Outlet. Downstream the diffuser, the flow extends over a sufficiently long domain so that it is fully developed at the exit section. Thus for any variable ϕ, the axial gradient is presumed to be zero, $\partial\phi/\partial x=0$.

Symmetry axis. On the symmetry axis, the radial derivative for any variable ϕ, vanishes, so that $\partial\phi/\partial y=0$.

Solid walls. At the wall boundaries, the non-slip conditions are applied.

4.3. Fluid Flow Solution Procedure

The CAFFA is a body-fitted finite volume code with a collocated variable arrangement. The pressure and mean velocity fields are coupled with the iterative SIMPLE algorithm, Patankar [15], to promote the solution of the pressure field. The treatment of the momentum equations at wall boundaries has been achieved by the wall function approach of Launder and Spalding [14]. An upwind-differencing scheme is used for the discretization of the governing equations. The linear equation systems arising from discretization are solved with the strongly implicit procedure of Stone [16]. Converged solutions are accepted when the absolute residual sums, normalized by the inlet fluxes, are below 10^{-4} for all variables.

5. Objective Function

The working principle of diffusers is to obtain a static pressure rise through deceleration of the fluid by area enlarging. Depending on the particular diffuser installation, the primary objective can be either a velocity-decrease (the diffuser is placed after the test-section discharge of a closed-circuit wind tunnel to decrease power requirements), a pressure-increase (the use of a diffuser downstream of a turbine), or to supply a downstream process with a steady, uniform flow (the diffuser is placed immediately before a turbomachine). In the present work, the design objective is maximizing the static pressure rise.

The diffuser performance is characterized by the static pressure recovery. The static pressure recovery coefficient C_p can be defined as the ratio of the static pressure rise through the diffuser to the dynamic pressure at the diffuser inlet:

$$C_p = \frac{p_{Ex} - p_{In}}{0.5\,\rho U_{In}^2} \tag{10}$$

where p_{In} and p_{Ex} are the average static pressures at the inlet and outlet of the diffuser, respectively. ρ is the fluid density and U_{In} is the average inlet velocity.

It is well known that for diffusers with a tailpipe discharge, the static pressure continues to rise slightly beyond the diffuser exit as the velocity distribution changes. Experimental investigations have shown that the position of maximum pressure varies with the divergence angle and other factors, and that it occurs between two and six outlet diameters downstream the exit in conical diffusers (Cockrell and Markland [17]). It is chosen to determine the inlet and outlet pressures at the entry plane of the diffuser and the plane of the maximum pressure in the tailpipe, respectively.

6. Optimization Algorithm

The technique used in this study for the optimization of two-dimensional diffusers is based on Genetic Algorithms (GA) (Goldberg, [18]). GAs are search procedures based on the mechanics of natural genetics in that a population of artificial individuals exchanges information to eventually adapt itself to set conditions according to the "survival of the fittest" principle.

6.1. Overview of Genetic Algorithms

Genetic algorithms are stochastic numerical search procedures inspired by biological evolution, cross-breeding trial solutions and allowing only the fittest solutions to survive and propagate to successive generations. They deal with a population of individual (candidate) solutions, which undergo constant changes by means of genetic operations of reproduction, crossover, and mutation. These solutions are ranked according to their fitness with respect to the objective function where the fit individuals are more likely to reproduce and propagate to the next generation. Based on their fitness values, individuals (parents) are selected for reproduction of the next generation by exchanging genetic information to form children (crossover). The parents are then removed and replaced in the population by the children to keep a stable population size. The result is a new generation with (normally) better fitness. Occasionally, mutation is introduced into the population to prevent the convergence to a local optimum and help generate unexpected directions in the solution space.

6.2. Components of Genetic Algorithms

Standard genetic algorithms involve three basic functions: selection, crossover, and mutation. Each function is briefly described below.

Selection. Individuals in a population are selected for reproduction according to their fitness values. In biology, fitness is the number of offspring that survive to reproduce. Given a population consisting of individuals identified by their chromosomes, selecting two chromosomes as parents to reproduce offspring is guided by a probability rule that the higher the fitness an individual has, the more likely the individual is selected. There are many selection methods available including weighted roulette wheel, sorting schemes, proportionate reproduction, and tournament selection.

Crossover. Selected parents reproduce the offspring by performing a crossover operation on the chromosomes (cut and splice pieces of one parent to those of the other). In nature, crossover implies two parents exchange parts of their corresponding chromosomes. In genetic algorithms, crossover operation makes two strings swap their partial strings. Since more fit individuals have a higher probability of producing offspring than less fit ones, the new population will possess on average an improved fitness. The basic crossover is a one-point crossover. Two selected strings create two offspring strings by swapping the partial strings, which are cut by one randomly sampled breakpoint along the chromosome. The one-point crossover can be easily extended to k-point crossover. It randomly samples k breakpoints on chromosomes and then exchanges every second corresponding segments of two parent strings.

Mutation. Mutation is an insurance policy against lost bits. It works on the level of string bits by randomly altering a bit value. With small probability, it randomly selects one bit on a chromosome then inverts the bit from 0 to 1 or vice versa. The operation is designed to prevent GA from premature termination, namely converging to a solution too early.

6.3. Micro-Genetic Algorithm

In this study, the optimization algorithm is based upon a Genetic Algorithm. The program was developed by David Carroll [19,20]. Reproduction and mutation take place using the micro-genetic algorithm (μ-GA) technique with elitist strategy (Krishnakumar, [21]). The population

size is fixed at only 5 individuals: since a strong crossover enriches diversity in the new population of strings, crossover is used with a probability of one and the mutation rate is kept at zero. This means that all the new five individuals are obtained through uniform crossover and none of them comes from the mutation of an individual of the old population. However, mutation still acts on the bits of the offspring with a low probability (0.005). The GA configuration used is illustrated in Table 4.

7. APPLICATIONS

The developed methodology is tested on the optimization through wall contouring of a given two-dimensional diffuser with a tailpipe discharge.

The inlet width W_1 of the two-dimensional diffuser, Fig. 2, is taken as 0.15 m and the exit width W_2 depends on the prescribed area ratio. Inlet and outlet sections of lengths $L_{in} = 0.5W_1$ and $L_{ex} = 3.5W_1$, respectively, are attached to the diffuser to get uni-directional flow at the inlet and the exit.

Three area ratios AR = 2, 2.5 and 3 are used in the present study with a fixed diffuser length to inlet width ratio, $L/W_1 = 1.5$. This yields wide divergence angles, 2 α, (e.g. 36.9, 53.1, and 67.4 deg, respectively). For each area ratio, the corresponding polynomial coefficients are obtained from Eq. (3) and given in Table 5. Table 6 presents the design constraints predicted by using Equations (4)-(6).

The flow is assumed to be steady turbulent incompressible flow. The inlet flow conditions to the diffuser are prescribed in the straight duct at L_{in} upstream of the diffuser inlet. The uniform inlet velocity U_{in} is 10 m/s. The Reynolds number based on the inlet width of the diffuser is 10^5. Due to symmetry, only the symmetric half of the diffuser is considered in the numerical solution. The diffuser centerline has symmetry boundary conditions and the upper wall is a no-slip wall.

The formulation of the optimization problem is as follows. The objective of the design optimization is to find the values of the design variables with the consideration of various constraints in such a way that an objective function attains a maximum value. The design constraints are determined by feasibility considerations for each parameter. The constraints are driven by functional restrictions and the Reynolds number is kept constant. Therefore, the considered problem has:

Objective function $\qquad\qquad F = C_p$

Parameters (design variables) $\qquad y_1, \ y_2$

Design constraints $\qquad\qquad$ Eqs. (4) - (6)

Table 4. The GA configuration used

GA Technique	μ-GA with elitism
Population size	5 individuals
Offspring by crossover	100%
Offspring by mutation	0%
Mutation probability	0.005
Bits per parameter	10

Table 5. Polynomial coefficients of Eq. (3)

Area Ratio	Polynomial Coefficients
AR = 2.0	$a_2 = (12y_1 - 3y_2)/W_1^2 + 2/(9W_1)$ $a_3 = (-20y_1 + 8y_2)/W_1^3 - 2/(3W_1^2)$ $a_4 = (8y_1 - 4y_2)/W_1^4 + 4/(9W_1^3)$
AR = 2.5	$a_2 = (12y_1 - 3y_2)/W_1^2 + 1/(3W_1)$ $a_3 = (-20y_1 + 8y_2)/W_1^3 - 1/W_1^2$ $a_4 = (8y_1 - 4y_2)/W_1^4 + 2/(3W_1^3)$
AR = 3.0	$a_2 = (12y_1 - 3y_2)/W_1^2 + 4/(9W_1)$ $a_3 = (-20y_1 + 8y_2)/W_1^3 - 4/(3W_1^2)$ $a_4 = (8y_1 - 4y_2)/W_1^4 + 8/(9W_1^3)$

Table 6. Design constraints

AR = 2.0	AR = 2.5	AR = 3.0
$0 \le y_1 \le y_2 \le W_1/2$	$0 \le y_1 \le y_2 \le 3W_1/4$	$0 \le y_1 \le y_2 \le W_1$
$y_2 < 4y_1 + \dfrac{2}{27}W_1$	$y_2 < 4y_1 + \dfrac{1}{9}W_1$	$y_2 < 4y_1 + \dfrac{4}{27}W_1$
$y_2 < y_1 + \dfrac{13}{54}W_1$	$y_2 < y_1 + \dfrac{13}{36}W_1$	$y_2 < y_1 + \dfrac{13}{27}W_1$

7.1. Grid Independence Tests

Before starting the optimization, a grid refinement study was performed for the 2-D diffuser with straight walls and an area ratio of 2. The grids used were: 100 x 30 (3,264 grid points), 120 x 40 (5,124 grid points) and 130 x 50 (6,864 grid points). Each grid set is in the longitudinal and vertical directions, respectively, and the grids are refined near the walls and at the regions with high gradients. The fine grid achieves a grid independent solution; therefore it is used for all computations to insure that any difference between the numerical and experimental results is due to the turbulence modeling.

7.2. Optimization Results

Figures 4 to 6 shows the hill charts of the pressure recovery coefficient for the non-dimensional parameters y_1 / y_{Ex} and y_2 / y_{Ex} for area ratios of 2, 2.5 and 3, respectively. For each area ratio, it can be noticed that different diffuser shapes are found to yield essentially the same performance. The central region indicates the optimal region. For example, for AR = 2, the space with $C_p = 0.69$ comprises designs with performance within 0.08% of the optimal. For the maximum pressure recovery coefficient, there are multiple design points that meet this objective.

The optimum values of the non-dimensional parameters y_1 / y_{Ex} and y_2 / y_{Ex} for AR = 2 are less than 0.3 and 0.55, respectively. These values decrease for great area ratios, Fig. 6.
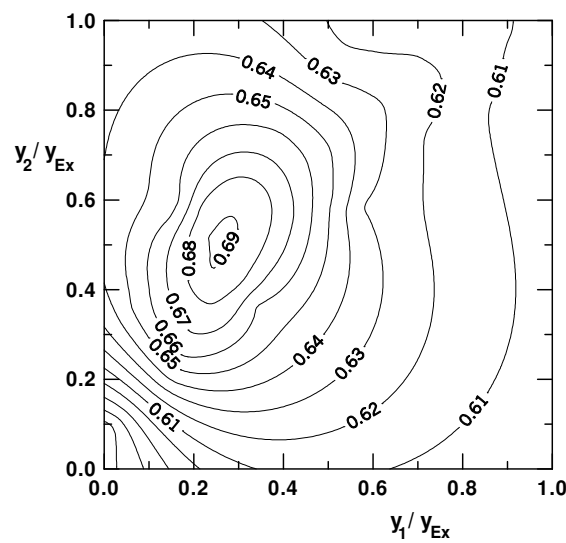

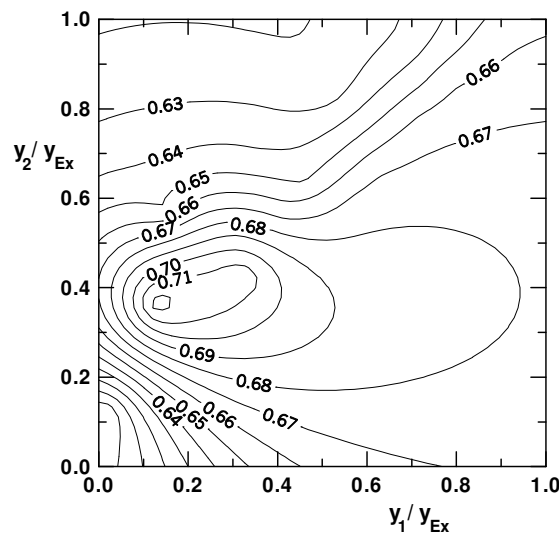Fig. 4. Hill chart of the pressure recovery coefficient for AR = 2

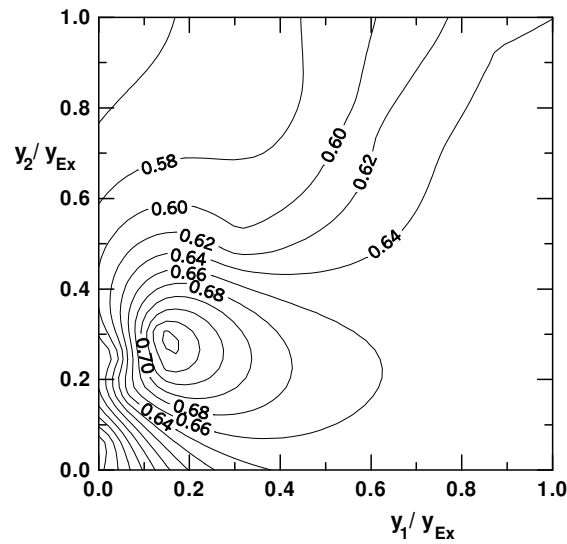Fig. 5. Hill chart of the pressure recovery coefficient for AR = 2.5

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Fig. 6. Hill chart of the pressure recovery coefficient for AR = 3

Table 7 gives the non-dimensional parameters y_1/y_{Ex} and y_2/y_{Ex}, and the corresponding diffuser shapes without the inlet and outlet sections. The numerical results indicate that the wall contouring effectiveness of the two-dimensional diffuser with a tailpipe discharge increases with the increment of the area ratio. C_p values for optimal contoured diffusers increases from 0.69 for AR = 2.0 to about 0.76 for AR = 3.0.

Table 7. Optimum curved diffusers C_p, parameters and shape

AR	y_1/y_{Ex}, y_2/y_{Ex} and C_p	Diffuser Shape
2.0	$y_1/y_{Ex} = 0.25013$ $y_2/y_{Ex} = 0.51453$ $C_p = 0.6908$	
2.5	$y_1/y_{Ex} = 0.127547$ $y_2/y_{Ex} = 0.3632467$ $C_p = 0.72544$	
3.0	$y_1/y_{Ex} = 0.13186$ $y_2/y_{Ex} = 0.30074$ $C_p = 0.76044$	

7.3. Gain in Diffuser Performance

The improvement in C_p over that for a straight wall diffuser represents the gain in pressure rise due to shaping of the diffuser with a polynomial curve. For an area ratio of 2, the turbulent flow in a straight wall diffuser is tested numerically and the obtained C_p is 0.6887. Comparing to the optimized curved diffuser's pressure recovery coefficient $C_p = 0.6908$, results in an improvement in C_p less than 1% which can be considered as very small gain. This is in consistent with the remarks of Madsen et al. [5] that the pressure recovery improves marginally for small area ratios and substantially for great values.

The obtained numerical results are compared with those of Madsen et al. [5]; for the same area ratio but with a different Reynolds number. The study of Madsen et al. [6] gives the predicted optimum value of C_p equals to 0.7185 for $y_1 / y_{Ex} = 0.3767$ and $y_2 / y_{Ex} = 0.5333$. Applying these values of parameters for the code used in this study, the predicted C_p is 0.6788. The comparison of the values of C_p indicates that the code used by Madsen et al. [6] has a weaker tendency for flow separation. The difference between the two codes applying the same standard k-ε model could be explained by factors such as numerical diffusion and discretization schemes used in the two codes.

Figure 7 presents the pressure recovery coefficients as a function of the diffuser area ratio for a fixed diffuser length to inlet width ratio, $L/W_1 = 1.5$. The diffuser ideal performance, $C_{pi} = 1 - 1/(AR)^2$, the numerical results obtained for the optimum contoured diffusers and straight wall diffusers, and the experimental data of Reneau et al. [22] for two-dimensional straight wall diffusers with free discharge are plotted. The difference between the present numerical results for the straight wall diffuser and the experimental results of Reneau et al. [22] is due to the existence of the tailpipe, which increases the pressure recovery. Also, in the transitory stall region, the k-ε turbulence model, among other models, overestimates C_p due to the underestimation of the reattachment length of the separation region, [23]-[26].

The comparison between the optimum contoured diffusers and the straight wall diffusers, Fig. 7, yields that a substantial improvement is achieved for area ratios with wide divergence angles. Wall contouring can move the point of separation nearer to the exit of diffuser and decrease the recirculation zone in the diffuser.

8. Conclusions

An automated design of a two-dimensional subsonic diffuser has been achieved. Three codes of fluid flow simulation (Grid, CAFFA and Plot) and an optimization tool using the micro-genetic algorithms have been coupled. The CFD model is based on the Reynolds-averaged Navier-Stokes equations, with the standard k-ε closure turbulence model. The objective of the optimization was to maximize the static pressure recovery coefficient. The optimization tool and the flow field simulation are evaluated through a test case. The flow is incompressible and fully turbulent with a Reynolds number of 10^5, based on the inlet width. The two-dimensional contoured diffuser was designed with the vertical positions of the two control points of the wall surface.
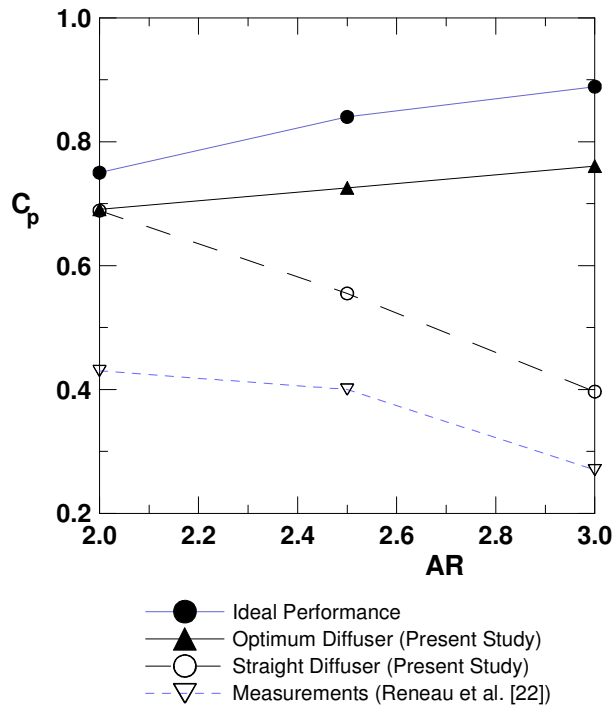
Fig. 7. Pressure recovery coefficients for the straight wall
and optimum contoured diffusers

The following conclusions may be drawn from the present study:

1- The design optimization tool is fully automated and it works smoothly providing improved subsonic two-dimensional diffuser geometries.

2- The diffuser performance can be improved by wall contouring. The improvement is marginal for small area ratios (AR = 2) and increases substantially for great area ratios (AR = 3).

3- The diffuser length to inlet width ratio used in the present study is comparatively small, $L/W_1 = 1.5$, and very wide-angled diffusers are tested. The main reasons for the substantial improvement in the pressure recovery by wall contouring are the movement of the point of separation nearer to the exit of diffuser and the decrease of the recirculation zone in the diffuser.

Acknowledgments

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