

# FLAP DEFLECTION OPTIMIZATION FOR TRANSONIC CRUISE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT OF SUPERSONIC TRANSPORT WING

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Wing flap deflection angles of a supersonic transport are optimized to improve transonic cruise performance. For this end, a numerical optimization method is adopted using a three-dimensional unstructured Euler code and a discrete adjoint code. Deflection angles of ten flaps; five for leading edge and five for trailing edge, are employed as design variables. The elliptic equation method is adopted for the interior grid modification during the design process. Interior grid sensitivities are neglected for efficiency. Also tested is the validity of the approximate gradient evaluation method for the present design problem and found that it is applicable for leading edge flap design in cases of no shock waves on the wing surface. The BFGS method is used to minimize the drag with constraints on the lift and upper surface Mach numbers. Two design examples are conducted; one is leading edge flap design, and the other is simultaneous design of leading edge and trailing edge flaps. The latter gave a smaller drag than the former by about two counts.

## Introduction

Due to the sonic boom problem, the next generation Supersonic Transport (SST) is supposed to cruise at a transonic speed over the land, while cruising at a supersonic speed over the sea. In order to improve its transonic cruise performance, leading edge (LE) and trailing edge (TE) flaps have been considered as efficient tools that do not degrade supersonic cruise performance of SST.[1,2] A SST wing cruising at a transonic cruise condition is prone to flow separation because its leading edges are usually of much smaller nose radius or sharper than transonic transports. Leading edge flaps can be very useful to avoid the flow separation in the transonic cruise.

Lovell[1] and Grenon[2] reported European researches to reduce drag at low speed and supersonic/transonic cruise conditions. In the references, LE flap optimization was adopted to improve transonic cruise performance and to avoid LE flow separation. Grenon[2] also reported the necessity of upward deflection of TE flaps in order to avoid flow separation near the wing tip area.

In this study, we employed five LE flaps and five TE flaps to improve transonic performance of an experimental supersonic transport, which is under development by NAL (National Aerospace Laboratory) of Japan. The flap deflection angles are optimized using a gradient-based numerical optimization technique, a three-dimensional computational fluid dynamics (CFD) code, and a discrete adjoint sensitivity code developed by Kim et.al[3].

## Flow Analysis

The Euler equations for compressible inviscid flows are written in an integral form as follows;

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t} \int_{\Omega} \mathbf{Q} dV + \int_{\partial\Omega} \mathbf{F}(\mathbf{Q}) \cdot \mathbf{n} dS = 0, \quad (1)$$

where  $\mathbf{Q} = [\rho, \rho u, \rho v, \rho w, e]^T$  is the vector of conservative variables;  $\rho$  the density;  $u, v, w$  the velocity components in the  $x, y, z$  directions; and  $e$  the total energy. The vector  $\mathbf{F}(\mathbf{Q})$  represents the inviscid flux vector and  $\mathbf{n}$  is the outward normal of  $\partial\Omega$  which is the boundary of the control volume  $\Omega$ . This system of equations is closed by the perfect gas equation of state with a constant ratio of specific heats.

The equations are solved by a finite volume cell-vertex scheme. The control volume is a non-overlapping dual cell. For a control volume, Eq.(1) can be written in an algebraic form as follows;

$$V_i \frac{\partial \mathbf{Q}_i}{\partial t} = - \sum_{j(i)} \Delta S_{ij} \mathbf{h}^{n+1} (\mathbf{Q}_{ij}^+, \mathbf{Q}_{ij}^-, \mathbf{n}_{ij}), \quad (2)$$

where  $\Delta S_{ij}$  is a segment area of the control volume boundary associated with edge connecting points  $i$  and  $j$ . This segment area  $\Delta S_{ij}$  as well as its unit normal  $\mathbf{n}_{ij}$  can be computed by summing up the contribution from each tetrahedron sharing the edge. The term  $\mathbf{h}$  is an inviscid numerical flux vector normal to the control volume boundary, and  $\mathbf{Q}_{ij}^{\pm}$  are flow variables on both sides of the control volume boundary. The subscript of summation,  $j(i)$ , means all node points connected to node  $i$ . The numerical flux  $\mathbf{h}$  is computed using an approximate Riemann solver of Harten-Lax- van Leer-Einfeldt-Wada(HLLEW)[4]. The second order spatial accuracy is realized by a linear reconstruction of the primitive gas dynamic variables'  $\mathbf{q} = [\rho, u, v, w, p]^T$  inside the control volume

In order to integrate Eq. (2) in time, the Lower-Upper Symmetric Gauss-Seidel(LU-SGS) implicit method [5] is adopted.

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### Sensitivity Analysis: Adjoint Method

A discrete adjoint method solves the following adjoint equation:

$$\left[ \frac{\partial R}{\partial Q} \right]^T \{\lambda\} + \left\{ \frac{\partial F}{\partial Q} \right\} = 0, \quad (3)$$

where  $R$  is the residual vector, and  $F$  is an objective function of design problem. If one finds the adjoint variable vector  $\{\lambda\}$  which satisfies the above adjoint equation, one can obtain the sensitivity derivative of  $F$  with respect to design variable  $\beta$  without any information about the flow variable sensitivity vector  $\{dQ/d\beta\}$ . This makes the computational cost for the sensitivity analysis independent of the number of design variables. Sensitivity derivatives of the objective function can be calculated by the following equation,

$$\left\{ \frac{dF}{d\beta} \right\} = \left\{ \frac{\partial F}{\partial X} \right\}^T \left\{ \frac{dX}{d\beta} \right\} + \left\{ \frac{\partial F}{\partial \beta} \right\} + \{\lambda\}^T \{C_i\} \quad (4)$$

$$\text{where } \{C_i\} = \left[ \frac{\partial R_i}{\partial X} \right] \left\{ \frac{dX}{d\beta} \right\} + \left\{ \frac{\partial R_i}{\partial \beta} \right\}.$$

All the required differentiation for the sensitivity equations is conducted by hand-differentiation. More details on the sensitivity analysis such as boundary conditions and code validation can be found in Ref.[3].

### Design Methodology

#### Design Objective

The present design method using the unstructured Euler solver and the adjoint method is applied to an unpowered experimental SST, which is under development by National Aerospace Laboratory of Japan as a basic study for the next generation supersonic transport.[6]

The objective of the present design study is defined as follows.

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Minimize } C_D \\ &\text{Subject to } C_L = C_L^* \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

, where  $C_D$  and  $C_L$  are drag and lift coefficients, respectively, and  $C_L^*$  is specified. If the lift constraint is dealt as an explicit constraint in an optimizer, it requires an additional adjoint code computation for the  $C_L$  derivatives. In this study, therefore, the lift constraint is satisfied running the flow solver in a fixed-lift mode. Since we would like to minimize drag when  $C_L = C_L^*$ , i.e. at an adjusted incidence angle, the objective function  $F = C_D$  should be modified as follows to consider the lift constraint consistently,

$$F = C_D - \frac{\left( \frac{\partial C_D}{\partial \alpha} \right)}{\left( \frac{\partial C_L}{\partial \alpha} \right)} (C_L - C_L^*) \quad (6)$$

where  $C_D$  and  $C_L$  are drag and lift coefficients respectively without any incidence angle modification, and  $C_L^*$  is the target lift coefficient, which is 0.200 for the present design study.

An additional constraint for the suppression of boundary layer separation is required, since the present design study adopts inviscid physics only. It is implemented by imposing upper bounds of effective Mach numbers on the wing surface as was employed in Refs.[1,2]. The effective Mach number is calculated from actual local Mach number considering local sweep angle which varies gradually from the leading edge sweep angle to trailing edge sweep angle. The upper bound of the effective Mach number is 1.3 for the first half chord, 1.1 for the second half chord region. This constraint is treated as a penalty term added explicitly to the Eq.(19) as follows.

$$F_{new} = F + w \sum_{\text{surface}} \max(0, p_{lim} - p_{surf}) \Delta S \quad (7)$$

, where  $w$  is a weighting factor multiplied to the penalty term, and  $p_{lim}$  is pressure limit calculated from the Mach number limit by the isentropic relation.  $\Delta S$  is an area of a surface grid cell.

### Design Parameters and Grid Modification Method

In the present design study, design variables are deflection angles of ten flaps; five LE and five TE flaps. Figure 1 shows definitions of LE and TE flaps on the main wing of the experimental SST. Chordwise length of all the LE flaps is set to be as 40 percent of the wing tip chord length, and TE flap length is defined to be 20 percent chord of TE kirk location inboard and 20 percent chord of local sections outboard. Flap deflections are made such that each grid point on the flaps are translated along the  $z$  axis only according to its distance from the hinge line, and thus, wing planform is kept the same as the initial geometry. All flap angles are defined on a plane normal to the hinge line. Counterclockwise flap deflections are defined to be positive; i.e. downward deflections for LE flaps and upward deflections for TE flaps are positive.

Between every two flaps, wing surface geometry is linearly interpolated instead of being split. The thickness and camber of the wing section geometry is kept the same as the initial geometry so that supersonic cruise performance of the aircraft is not penalized by the flap design for transonic cruise.

When the surface grid is modified, the interior grid points should be moved accordingly. In the structured grid approach, the interior grid positions can be moved with a relative ease using an algebraic mesh movement strategy which modifies the grid point coordinates along a grid line of the same index. In the unstructured grid method, however, such a simple grid modification method cannot be applied, and a more sophisticated grid movement method is needed.

For the movement of the grid points with the per-

turbed surface grid, we used the elliptic partial differential equation method proposed by Crumpton and Giles[7]. In the method, the displacement  $\delta x$  from initial grid point  $x_0$  is prescribed by the following equation with Dirichlet boundary conditions

$$\nabla \cdot (k \nabla \delta x) = 0. \quad (8)$$

Diffusion coefficient  $k$  is inversely proportional to the cell volume so that a cell with a small volume goes under a rigid motion.

The elliptic equation (8) is discretized by a finite volume method, and subsequent linear algebraic equations are solved by the conjugate gradient method[8]. Required computational time to obtain converged solution  $\delta x$  was the same with that of a few iterations of the Euler solver.

### Grid Sensitivity

The elliptic equation for the interior grid movement is differentiated to be applied to the grid sensitivity calculation for the vector  $\{C\}$  in Eq.(4) with respect to each geometric design variable. Since this requires almost the same computational cost with the grid movement procedure, the total computational burden would be a substantial amount if the number of design variables becomes large.

One possible way to reduce the computational burden of the grid sensitivity calculation is to neglect the grid sensitivity of interior node points. It has been shown in Refs.[3,9] that in cases of inviscid flows interior grid sensitivity can be ignored for design variables not associated with a translation of a body. In this study, therefore only the surface grid sensitivities are considered, and interior grid sensitivities for the flap deflection are ignored for efficiency.

### Approximate Gradient Evaluation

Mohammadi[10] suggested the following approximate gradient evaluation which neglects the sensitivity of an objective function with respect to flow variables when the objective function is based on a boundary integral;

$$\left\{ \frac{dF}{d\beta} \right\} \approx \left\{ \frac{\partial F}{\partial Q} \right\}^T \left\{ \frac{dQ}{d\beta} \right\} + \left\{ \frac{\partial F}{\partial X} \right\}^T \left\{ \frac{dX}{d\beta} \right\} \approx \left\{ \frac{\partial F}{\partial X} \right\}^T \left\{ \frac{dX}{d\beta} \right\} \quad (9)$$

This approximation is based on an observation that the dominant part in the gradient is the partial derivative with respect to geometry and not to the flow variable when a small change in geometry causes very slight variations in flow variables. This would, of course, be not applicable to general cases, and, therefore should be adopted with a great care. However, if it is found to be valid for a problem at hand, computational cost for the sensitivity analysis can be drastically reduced since any analysis of sensitivity equations is not required and only the partial differentiation of the objective function with respect to geometry change is needed.

### Optimization Method

For the unconstrained minimization of the objective function in Eq.(20), the ADS(Automated Design Synthesis) program[17] was used as an optimizer. The BFGS(Broydon-Fletcher-Goldfarb-Shanno) method[8] is adopted in order to determine a search direction. One-dimensional search is then conducted using a quadratic polynomial interpolation. Detailed algorithms and methodologies of the optimization method are described in Ref.8.

### Design Results

Design conditions are a free-stream Mach number of 0.95 and  $C_L$  of 0.2. Figure 2 shows the SST configuration and surface grids of initial geometry. The number of nodes and cell for the adopted volume grid are about 270,000 and 1,500,000, respectively.

Before we go on to the design optimization results, accuracy comparisons of sensitivity gradients are made for the simplification ignoring interior grid sensitivity and the approximate gradient evaluation using geometric sensitivity only. Figure 3 shows sensitivity derivatives of the objective function with respect to the ten flap deflection angles for initial geometry without any flap deflection. Derivatives obtained without interior grid sensitivity shows good agreement with those calculated with surface grid sensitivity only. The similar results were also reported in a previous work by the authors[3] for supersonic flow conditions.

In Fig.3, sensitivity derivatives obtained by the approximate gradient evaluation method are also presented(diamond symbols). It is interesting to note that the derivatives with respect to the LE flap deflection calculated by the AGE show similar trends with those obtained by the adjoint method, while those with respect to the TE flap have opposite signs with similar magnitude. This implies that deflection of LE flaps causes little change in flow variables, and therefore the effect of geometry change dominates in the total sensitivity derivatives for the present flow condition. On the other hand, for the TE flaps, the variation of the flow variables due to the flap deflection dominates in the total derivatives of the objective function. In order to compare the direction of the sensitivity derivative vector for LE flaps, normalized vector components are compared in Fig.4(a), which shows that the direction of the two vectors agrees well each other, although their magnitudes have some variations. This may allow us to get successful results of LE flap optimization with the sensitivity information obtained by the approximate gradient evaluation method.

In this study, two design examples are conducted; one is LE flaps design, and the other is simultaneous design of LE and TE flaps. We compared LE flap design results by the approximate gradient evaluation and by the adjoint method. For the LE and TE flap design, the adjoint method is used since the AGE does



not give reliable sensitivity information for the TE flaps.

The density residual of the Euler solver was reduced by four orders from the initial value, and that of the adjoint code by two orders. Lower and upper bounds of the ten design variables are set as  $-30$  and  $+30$  degrees, respectively, so that the design space is large enough and the design is not disturbed by the bounds.

### Design I: LE flap design

We conducted the LE flap design optimization by the AGE and by the adjoint method with five flap deflection angles as design variables. Although the approximate gradient evaluation gives accurate search direction for the initial geometry, the deviation of the normalized gradient vector components from the adjoint result increased to  $15 \sim 30\%$  as the design process continued to the second iteration as can be seen in Fig. 4(b). This is because shock wave was about to form on the upper surface, and the flow variable change due to the LE flap deflection would increase drastically if there forms a shock wave on the wing surface.

Table 1 presents LE flap design results by the two sensitivity calculation methods. For both of the cases, little improvement was made after design iteration two, and the drag coefficient was reduced by about 12 counts retaining the lift coefficient as the specified value. Because of the increased inaccuracy of the AGE, no perceivable flap deflection changes were made after iteration one, whereas the adjoint method provided accurate search direction so that flaps are deflected a few degrees more, and slight performance improvement was made accordingly. However, in spite of the inaccurate (but of right sign) sensitivity information of the AGE after iteration two, the difference of resulted drag coefficients was only about 0.2 count. This is because a local minimum solution was found by the first design iteration, and after that, accuracy of the

sensitivity derivatives seems not to affect the final results. Comparing the results by the two methods shown in Table 1, it can be noted that LE flaps located inboard (flap #1, 2, and 3) show similar deflection angles and the same is true for those located outboard (flap #4, 5). This implies that one may employ two flaps only; one for the inboard and the other for the outboard for a practical design of LE flap deflection for SST without major loss in aerodynamic performance.

Figure 5 shows surface pressure distributions at five wing sections that lie at the centerline of each LE flap. Leading edge suction peaks have been reduced by the flap deflection, and the minimum pressure point occurs on the hinge line of the flaps. It is noted that the surface Mach number limits are not touched by the initial and design pressure distributions. The surface Mach number limitation was the main factor that kept the LE flap angles from being increased more in Ref.[1,2]. In the present example, however, it did not act as an active constraint, and thus, the penalty term in Eq.(7) was always zero during the design process. This is because of the fact that the SST wing adopted as an initial geometry of this study was design in a Natural Laminar Flow (NFL) concept for the supersonic cruise condition, which made the leading edge of the wing very blunt.[6]

### Design II: design of LE and TE flaps

In the present design example, we tried to optimize the LE and TE flap angles with the design I obtained by using the AGE method as the initial point. The sensitivity analysis showed that all the TE flaps would be deflected downward to minimize the objective function. This is an interesting point reminding that the necessity of upward deflection of TE flaps was reported in Ref.2 in order to avoid flow separation near the wing tip area. We can expect that the direction and magnitude of TE flap deflection would be influenced by the performance improvement and by suppression of flow separation.

At the first optimization iteration, it was found that the maximum Mach number limit is a main factor that limits the deflection of inboard TE flaps, i.e. flap #6, 7, and 8. As a result, the downward deflection angles for the first iteration were only about 0.5 degrees inboard and about 0.3 outboard, and the drag coefficient was reduced by about one-and-half counts. Figure 7 shows inboard section pressure distributions obtained by the one-dimensional search of the first iteration. Outboard pressure distributions do not differ much from those of design example I depicted in Fig.5 and, therefore, are not presented here. The inboard flow is reaccelerated near the hinge of the TE flaps, and a shock occurred just before the TE to recover the stagnation pressure. Although the solution did not violate the maximum Mach limit, it was still believed to cause flow separation in the real viscous flow due to the shock wave

Table 1 Results of design I; LE flap design

		Initial	Sensitivity derivative calculation method	
			Appr. grad. Evaluation ( $\Delta$ (%))	Adjoint method ( $\Delta$ (%))
$C_L$		0.2002	0.2002 (0.0)	0.2000 (-0.1)
$C_D$		0.0080 87	0.006922 (-14.41)	0.006901 (-14.67)
L/D		24.76	28.93 (+16.84)	28.98 (+17.04)
flap angles (deg.)	$\delta_1$	0.	4.63	6.18
	$\delta_2$	0.	5.01	6.75
	$\delta_3$	0.	4.40	5.76
	$\delta_4$	0.	17.27	19.27
	$\delta_5$	0.	17.10	19.99



which is too close to the TE. Same was the case for a design with the undeflected wing shape as an initial point. This shows the difficulty of imposing the maximum Mach number limit on the wing surface. Mach limits defined more sophisticatedly are required so that this kind of aerodynamic optimization problem can be attacked by using Euler codes rather than by more expensive Navier-Stokes computations.

Since the near-TE shock wave occurred for downward TE flap deflection of about 0.5 degree only, we decided to freeze (i.e. not to deflect) the inboard TE flaps (flaps #6,7 and 8) and to design outboard flap deflections (flaps #9 and 10) only in addition to LE flaps. This design example was terminated after five iterations since there was no further performance improvement. Table 2 presents the LE and TE flap design results with inboard TE flaps frozen. Additional drag reduction of about two counts was made by the present design study from the optimized LE flaps of design I. Figure 8 shows surface pressure distributions of the design. Pressure distributions of inboard sections show little difference from those of initial geometry except the fact that upper surface pressures have been slightly increased. This is because the downward deflection of TE flaps increased the lift, and therefore, the incidence angle was decreased to match the specified target lift coefficient. Outboard wing sections show the effects of TE flaps deflection; the flow is accelerated around the TE flap hinge line, and section lift is increased.

The reason why the outboard TE flaps can be deflected by about two degrees without any shock waves, whereas the inboard LE flaps suffer from the strong shock wave and flow separation with a deflection of about 0.5 degree only, is that the TE sweep angle of the experimental SST of NAL is 30 degrees outboard, while there is no TE sweep inboard. This sweep effect allows the outboard flow to have much more separation margin than the inboard flow since the former has much less effective Mach numbers on the wing surface near the TE than the latter.

Table 2 Results of design II; LE/TE flap design

		Initial	Design ( $\Delta$ (%))	
$C_L$		0.2002	0.1999 (-0.15)	
$C_D$		0.006922	0.006723 (-2.88)	
L/D		28.93	29.66 (+2.52)	
Flap deflection angles (deg.)	LE (downward deflection+)	$\delta_1$	4.63	5.17
		$\delta_2$	5.01	5.60
		$\delta_3$	4.40	4.88
		$\delta_4$	17.27	18.00
		$\delta_5$	17.10	18.06
	TE (upward deflection +)	$\delta_6$	0.	0.
		$\delta_7$	0.	0.
		$\delta_8$	0.	0.
		$\delta_9$	0.	-2.26
		$\delta_{10}$	0.	-1.68

In the present design studies, no scaling to the design variables were made which might have significant effects on the design results. Any other local minimum with better performance than the present results could be obtained if a proper scaling was done for the design variables.

### Concluding Remarks

Leading edge/trailing edge flaps deflections are designed to improve transonic cruise performance of a supersonic transport aircraft without degrading its supersonic performance. An aerodynamic design optimization system combining an optimization package with the unstructured Euler solver and the discrete adjoint method was employed for efficient design studies. Deflection angles of five leading edge flaps and five trailing edge flaps are defined as design variables. The approximate gradient evaluation method, which ignores the effect of flow variable change due to the geometry perturbation on sensitivity derivatives, was found to be applicable to the design of leading edge flap angles, whereas, it gives totally wrong sensitivity information for the trailing edge deflections. By the design of leading edge flaps only, drag was reduced by about 12 counts and the lift-over-drag ratio was increased by 17 percents. With this result as an initial point, followed is a simultaneous design of leading edge/trailing edge flaps to obtain additional two-count reduction of drag coefficient. Inboard trailing edge flaps were frozen in order not to allow flow separation on the flaps. Deflection of outboard trailing edge flaps had much more margin for the flow separation than the inboard flaps because of the sweep back of outboard trailing edge.

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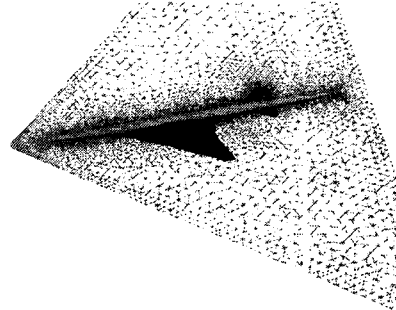


Fig.2 Surface geometry of NAL experimental SST configuration and grids on symmetric plane

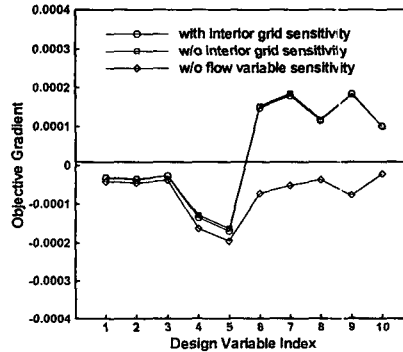


Fig.3 Comparison of sensitivity derivatives for initial geometry

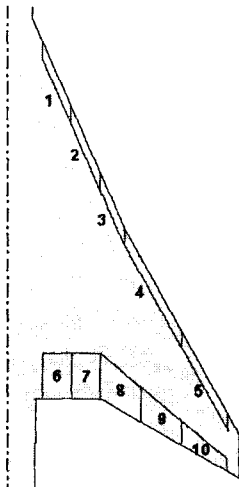
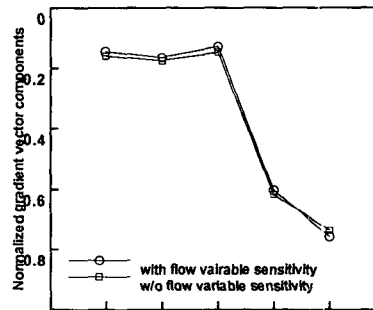
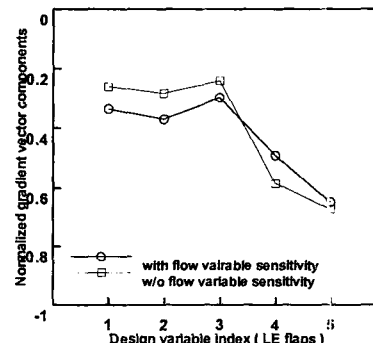


Fig.1 Definition of leading edge and trailing edge flaps



(a) At initial geometry



(b) After design iteration two

Fig.4 Comparison of normalized sensitivity derivatives

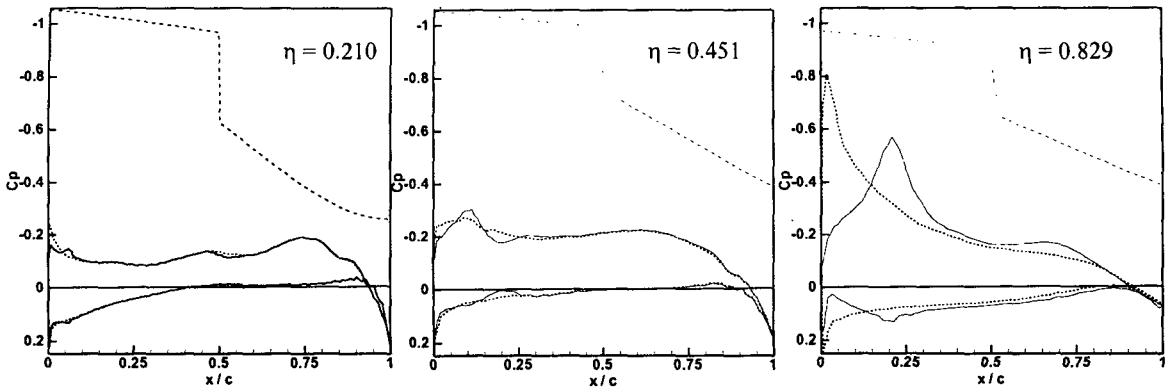
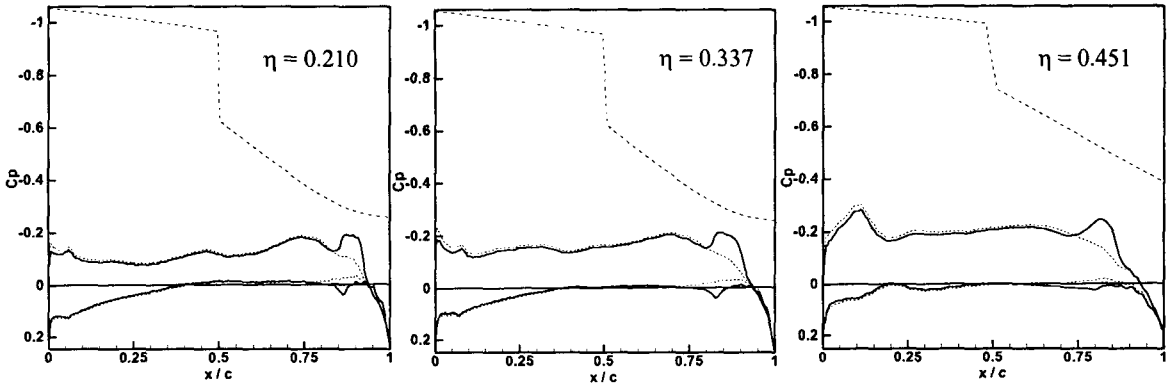
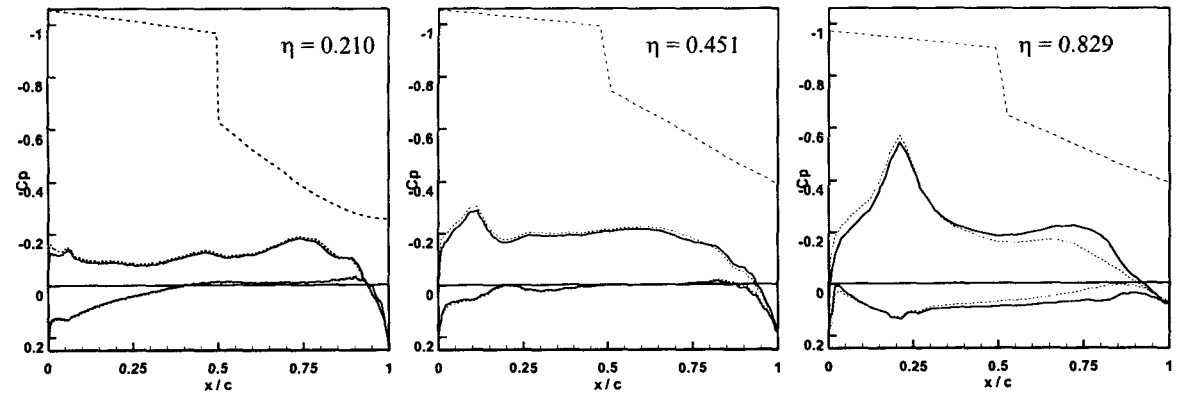


Fig.5 Wing section surface pressure distributions (design I by AGE)

Fig.6 LE & TE design results with inboard flap deflection activated;  
Surface pressure distributions for inboard sectionsFig.7 LE & TE design results with inboard flap not activated;  
Surface pressure distributions