

## TOEFL INTEGRATED ESSAY SAMPLE I

There are two possible **explanations as to** the rapidly declining populations of sea otters along the Alaskan coast. While the reading passage argues that the environmental pollution hypothesis better accounts for the decline, the lecturer questions the points raised in the passage, favoring the predation hypothesis.

Firstly, the passage asserts that increased level of chemicals decreases the otters' resistance to life-threatening infections, **thereby** indirectly causing their death. However, as is pointed out in the lecture, **because** no dead sea otters have been observed to wash up on the shores, the pollution hypothesis is weakened. **Since** predators would immediately eat the otters that they have caught, the absence of dead otters on the coast lends strength to the predation hypothesis.

A further point made in the passage against the predation hypothesis is that orcas are the only widely occurring predators along the western coast and they prey on large mammals, not on otters. This explanation is called into question by the lecturer, who argues that *because* whale populations, *which orcas used to feed on,* have disappeared **as a consequence of** human predation, orcas have had to change their diet and feed on smaller mammals such as seals, sea lions and sea otters.

Lastly, the passage explains the uneven pattern of otter decline by uneven concentrations of pollutants along the coast. According to the lecturer, on the other hand, this fact is better explained by the predation hypothesis. She asserts that the otter populations have declined in locations which are accessible by orcas, **while** shallow and rocky locations which are difficult for orcas to access are precisely the places where the otter populations have remained stable.