In our class, Rex came up with a complicated sentence. During the introductions, he wanted to explain why he is learning German. I would like to use this example to demonstrate that even sentences with modal verbs and sub-ordinating conjunctions can be conquered and are not really as confusing as may seem at first sight. (I hope you don’t mind me using your sentence, Rex.)

He started off with

„Ich lerne Deutsch, weil …“

He continued to say that he wants to go to Germany to spend a biking vacation there.

So how can you avoid the pitfalls of the German word order with modals and sub-ordinating conjunctions?

Let’s start with a more bare bones sentence and work our way up to the final sentence.

Let’s first say „I spend my vacation“.

**to spend a vacation/to holiday** in German is „Urlaub machen“, the verb *machen* combines with a complement (*Urlaub*) to an idiomatic expression. Verb complements most often behave like the separable prefix part of verbs, which means they move to the end of the sentence.

So „I spend my vacation“. will be „Ich mache Urlaub“.

Now, let us add the place: „I spend my vacation in Germany“. This translates into „Ich mache in Deutschland Urlaub“.
(Remember, *Urlaub machen* behaves like a separable prefix verb and splits.)

Let’s go for the bicycling part: „I spend my vacation bicycling in Germany“. Using participles as nouns (the –ing nouns, e.g. bicycling) is not possible, we have to come up with a different construction, in this case a preposition with a noun will do: **mit dem Fahrrad** (mit is a dative preposition, therefore the article *das* that accompanies Fahrrad changes into *dem*).

Bear with me, we are almost there now!

„I spend my vacation bicycling in Germany“*. would thus be

„Ich mache in Deutschland [mit dem Fahrrad] Urlaub“.
Let us introduce the modal verb now. Rex said, he wants to spend his vacation bicycling in Germany. Remember: modal verbs take the place of the finite verb and send that verb to the very end of the sentence. Thus verb complements and verbs are reunited at the end.

„I want to spend my vacation bicycling in Germany“.  

„Ich will in Deutschland [mit dem Fahrrad] Urlaub machen“.

Next is our last step: we will string the two sentences together

„I learn German“ + ,,I want to spend my vacation bicycling in Germany“.

To put the two sentences into a causal relationship we will use the conjunction because.

„I learn German because I want to spend my vacation bicycling in Germany“.

As you see there is no change in the word order in English.

Now for the German counterpart:

„Ich lerne Deutsch.“ + „Ich will in Deutschland [mit dem Fahrrad] Urlaub machen“.

The conjunction that corresponds to because is weil. Since weil is a sub-ordinating conjunction, which means the main clause it precedes turns into a subordinate clause, it sends the finite verb to the final position.

„Ich lerne Deutsch, weil ich in Deutschland [mit dem Fahrrad] Urlaub machen will“.  